



AB Volvo

## Press release

# Two young researchers will share the Assar Gabrielsson Award for their research into leukaemia and screening for prostate cancer

**For the first time, the Assar Gabrielsson Foundation is dividing its award between two medical researchers. The winners, Anna Staffas and Rebecka Arnsrud Godtman, have carried out research into cancer which has aroused a great deal of interest. Each of them will receive SEK 100,000.**

The Assar Gabrielsson Foundation aims to draw attention to both experimental and clinical research. This is why from this year onwards two prizes will be awarded, one in each category.

In her thesis, Anna Staffas studied the genetic changes that give rise to leukaemia. She was able to demonstrate the importance of certain mutations in the prognosis for children with leukaemia. She has also shown that knowledge about the mutations makes it possible to identify which type of treatment each patient should receive. In addition, she studied the mechanism behind a certain mutation and discovered how it turned a normal cell into a cancer cell.

Rebecka Arnsrud Godtman's thesis covered the subject of over-diagnosis in early screening for prostate cancer using blood tests for PSA (prostate-specific antigen). She demonstrated that the current lack of organisation in the investigation of the PSA figure in Swedish men resulted in only slightly reduced mortality, while an organised screening programme could reduce the risk of death from prostate cancer by around 40%. In addition, she identified that the risk of overtreatment can be reduced by so-called active monitoring, where treatment is offered only in the cases where the tumour shows signs of becoming more aggressive.

"The research carried out by both the award winners is of high quality and asks important questions. The research results have attracted a lot of attention and have already had an influence on health care. They have brought about a change in the way children with a certain type of leukaemia are treated and in how men with prostate cancer are cared for," says Professor Eva Forssell-Aronsson, Executive Member of the Assar Gabrielsson Foundation.

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The Assar Gabrielsson Foundation has been in existence since 1962 and its aim is to promote research, in particular into cancer. It primarily supports research projects which are considered to be promising but which do not yet have the necessary weight to attract grants from central funds. The director Assar Gabrielsson was one of the founders of AB Volvo.

"Many of the theses published at the University of Gothenburg are of very high quality, so to receive the Assar Gabrielsson Award in the face of this type of competition is a great honour and confirms that my research is important. I now have a postdoc position at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. In the long term, I hope to be able to bring back new expertise and to create opportunities to broaden the scope of cancer research at the University of Gothenburg," says Anna Staffas.

Rebecka Arnsrud Godtman is also very pleased to have received the Assar Gabrielsson Award. "Being awarded this prize is a major recognition of my work and it is excellent that is now being given for both clinical and pre-clinical research. I very much want to improve PSA screening and I am aiming to find a method which is so good that general screening for prostate cancer can be introduced. The award has also given me the opportunity to apply for additional funding and to continue my research."

### **The ceremony**

The Assar Gabrielsson Award will be presented on Wednesday 11 May between 15.00 and 16.00 in the Birgit Thilander room in the Academicum at Sahlgrenska Academy, Medicinaregatan 3, Gothenburg. During the ceremony both award winners will present their research. The ceremony is open to the media and the general public.

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