

Professor Karl-Johan Malmberg awarded Tobiaspriset 2026

Professor Karl-Johan Malmberg is awarded Tobiaspriset 2026 for his research on cell-based immunotherapy for blood cancers. The prize sum of SEK 10 million will be allocated at SEK 2 million per year over a five-year period.

Karl-Johan Malmberg is based at the Department of Medicine, Huddinge (MedH), at Karolinska Institutet, and at Oslo University Hospital. His work has established natural killer (NK) cells as a new platform for cancer treatment. NK cells can be used to treat leukaemia and other haematological malignancies, and unlike traditional cell therapies, NK cells can be used as standardised treatments for many patients.

A key challenge in the field is that therapeutic immune cells often lose function or are rejected after infusion. Karl-Johan Malmberg's research group has developed strategies to improve the persistence and effectiveness of NK cell therapies. His research spans from fundamental discoveries in immune cell regulation to the development of new therapies now advancing toward clinical testing.

"I am extremely happy and humbled to receive Tobiaspriset 2026. The funding will allow us to accelerate our efforts to develop new and more effective cell and gene therapies for hematological malignancies. The possibility to make groundbreaking discoveries in cancer immunotherapy has never been greater and it is a very exciting time for all of us active in the field," says Karl-Johan Malmberg.

The Tobias Foundation was established in 1992 and has played a central role in the development of transplantation medicine in Sweden, among other things through the establishment of the national stem cell registry, the Tobias Registry. Through long-term funding, the Foundation has contributed to the development of cell-based therapies both nationally and internationally.

Jonas Frisé is Chair of the Tobias Foundation.

"This year's award recognizes research that combines deep biological insight with clear potential to improve treatment for patients with severe blood cancers," says Jonas Frisé.