



UniversitätsKlinikum Heidelberg



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IN DER HELMHOLTZ-GEMEINSCHAFT

Press Release

## International Symposium on Urologic Cancer in Heidelberg

*Heidelberg, January 21, 2013* – **Cancer of the prostate is the most common type of cancer in men. Unlike other tumor types, prostate cancer has good chances of successful treatment if diagnosed early. Researchers from around the globe will discuss the latest advances in diagnostics and treatment of prostate cancer and other urologic cancers at an international conference on “Translations in Urologic Oncology” on January 25 and 26 in Heidelberg. Cancer researcher and Nobel Prize laureate Prof. Harald zur Hausen will be a guest speaker at the conference organized by the Urology Department of Heidelberg University Hospital and the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ). Physicians, scientists and journalists are welcome to attend and will find the conference program at [www.uro-oncology2013.com](http://www.uro-oncology2013.com) where they may also register.**

Cancer of the prostate is not only the most common urologic cancer, followed by cancers of the bladder, kidneys, testicles and penis, but also the most common cancer in men. In Germany, the expected number of newly diagnosed cases in 2012 is 68,000.

Prostate cancer commonly affects elderly patients. Unlike other tumors, prostate cancer grows very slowly. As long as the cancer stays within the prostate and has not yet spread (metastasized) to other parts of the body, chances of successful treatment by surgery or radiotherapy are good. Nevertheless, about 12,000 men die from the consequences of prostate cancer in this country every year.

Prof. Dr. Markus Hohenfellner, Medical Director of the Urology Department at Heidelberg University Hospital, who hosts the conference on “Translations in Urologic Oncology”, comments: “The high death toll shows that there still is an urgent need for advances in diagnostics and therapy. The goal is to detect tumors as early as possible to prevent metastasis. Surgery and radiotherapy methods already offer a broad range of excellent treatment options, but we strive to further improve their effectiveness and to minimize the rate of side effects.”

The two-day conference at the Communication Center of the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) will deal with major developments in diagnosis and treatment of urologic cancer. Translational medicine is the keyword for intensifying the exchange of information between basic researchers and clinicians in order to create a better understanding of each other’s possibilities and challenges. For Professor Hohenfellner, this is an indispensable development: “Only free exchange of knowledge between researchers of various disciplines in medicine, biochemistry, computer sciences and engineering will lead to the development of novel solutions for solving our most prominent health problems. I invite all interested clinicians and researchers to learn about these developments at our conference.” Participants will find the conference program at [www.uro-oncology2013.com](http://www.uro-oncology2013.com) where they may also register.

Heidelberg is particularly suited as a venue for this event, because two internationally leading medical care and research centers are located at its Neuenheimer Feld Campus: Heidelberg University Hospital and the German Cancer Research Center, which jointly maintain the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg.



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The Department of Urology at Heidelberg University Hospital has a long tradition of surgical urology, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and continues to be a competence center in its field. Prostate cancer, its diagnosis, treatment and related clinical-scientific research are a special focus of this department. The research and translational Section of Molecular Urooncology headed by Prof. Dr. Stefan Duensing conducts gene analyses and develops new biomarkers to facilitate tumor treatment tailored to the individual patient. The full range of advanced surgical methods is available, such as minimally invasive tumor resection using a surgical robot.

The Department of Radiooncology and Radiation Therapy headed by Prof. Dr. Dr. Jürgen Debus is a worldwide leader in radiation therapy for cancer. Depending on the stage and type of tumor, advanced methods such as intensity-modulated radiation therapy or brachytherapy are used. Since 2009, the department has treated patients at the Heidelberg Ion Therapy Center (HIT), where innovative radiation methods using protons and heavy ions are being used and clinically tested. A clinical trial is currently underway to determine whether ion beam therapy is superior to modern radiation therapy based on photon beams. "We already have very good treatment results with the standard radiation therapies," says Professor Debus, who is also Medical Director of HIT. "The clinical trial is intended to show whether the biological advantage of ion beam therapy, which facilitates more specific tumor targeting while reducing exposure of surrounding tissue, also has an impact on clinical results."

Next door, at DKFZ, scientists are laying the groundwork for future achievements in cancer diagnostics and treatment. DKFZ sets benchmarks, particularly in the field of modern magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Just recently, a highly innovative PET-MR device combining MRI with positron emission tomography (PET) has started operating. Professor Heinz-Peter Schlemmer, head of the Radiology Division, explains: "This enables us not only to image high-resolution structures down to millimeter range, but also to obtain biological information from the images. This is particularly relevant in prostate cancer diagnosis." Prostate cancer often shows great differences in malignancy, and not every cancer requires surgery or radiotherapy. So far, however, clinicians often do not know which cases require immediate intervention and which cases justify watchful waiting because the cancer is growing slowly. "Advanced imaging methods contribute substantially to making an exact diagnosis at an early stage and to choosing an individually tailored treatment for the patient," says Schlemmer.

Scientists at DKFZ and the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg, a joint project of DKFZ and Heidelberg University Hospital, are also studying the genetic causes of prostate cancer. Researchers at Professor Holger Sültmann's department are looking for defects in the genomes of 250 prostate tumors. "We can only treat a tumor specifically if we know the causes driving it," says Sültmann explaining his approach. The study aims to find cancer-specific molecules that may be suitable targets for treatment.



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#### **German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ)**

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 2,500 employees is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. At DKFZ, more than 1,000 scientists investigate how cancer develops, identify cancer risk factors and endeavor to find new strategies to prevent people from getting cancer. They develop novel approaches to make tumor diagnosis more precise and treatment of cancer patients more successful. The staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. Jointly with Heidelberg University Hospital, DKFZ has established the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg, where promising approaches from cancer research are translated into the clinic. In the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research (DKTK), one of six German Centers for Health Research, DKFZ maintains translational centers at seven university partnering sites. Combining excellent university hospitals with high-profile research at a Helmholtz Center is an important contribution to improving the chances of cancer patients. DKFZ is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers, with ninety percent of its funding coming from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the remaining ten percent from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

#### **Heidelberg University Hospital and Medical Faculty of Heidelberg University**

Patient Care, Research and Teaching of International Standing  
Heidelberg University Hospital is among the largest and most renowned medical centers in Germany. The Medical Faculty of Heidelberg University ranges among the internationally relevant biomedical research institutes in Europe. The common goal is to develop new therapies and to apply them rapidly for the benefit of the patient. Hospitals and Faculty have approximately 11,000 employees and are active in training and qualification. In more than 50 departments, clinics and special departments with about 2,000 hospital beds, approximately 550,000 patients receive inpatient and outpatient treatment each year. There are currently about 3,600 aspiring doctors studying medicine in Heidelberg; the Heidelberg Curriculum Medicinale (HeiCuMed) is at the top of medical teaching and training in Germany.  
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