

No. 24

April 15, 2011 (Sel)

## Joining Forces Against Cancer – German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research Gets Started

**Germany's Research Minister, Dr. Annette Schavan, announced today the decision about the funding of the German Centers for Health Research. Hence, the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research can now start its work. An internationally staffed expert committee has certified highest excellence to the general concept of the consortium, a partnership of the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) in Heidelberg with seven university sites. The consortium will be generously funded; its annual budget will be gradually increased from five million euros this year to about 30 million euros by 2014.**

"In cancer research, we have achieved crucial advances in recent years," says Professor Dr. Otmar D. Wiestler, DKFZ's Scientific Director. "Now it is time to translate these findings from the laboratory into clinical practice. The German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research offers ideal conditions for us to do so." The partnership of the German Cancer Research Center with seven university sites evolved from a joint initiative by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe) and the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ). The consortium will help to translate current research results even more swiftly into clinical practice. At each of the partnering sites, a translational center will be established, which will be a joint project of DKFZ and the respective university. "The collaboration of the eight partners and the contribution of clinical expertise will also lend international visibility to Germany," says Professor Dr. Hubert Serve, Medical Director of the Department of Medicine II – Hematology, Oncology, Rheumatology, Infectiology of Johann-Wolfgang Goethe University Hospitals, and coordinator of the Frankfurt/Mainz partnering site.

The general medical concept of the partners in the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research provides for seven translational research programs in the areas of *Signaling Pathways of Carcinogenesis, Molecular Diagnosis of Cancer, Tumor Immunology, Stem Cells and Cancer, Imaging and Radiation Therapy, Therapy Resistance, and Cancer Prevention and Early Detection*.

In addition, there will be five research platforms which will be available for all partnering sites. A *Clinical Communication* platform will ensure uniform diagnosis standards for all patients so that they may then receive the best possible treatment in large clinical trials. Various *Service* units will be available to outsource routine laboratory work, which will be conducted according to uniform standards. *Preclinical Models* will facilitate common access to animals that develop specific cancers due to a genetic modification. *Substance Development* will focus on selected areas and on collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry. Finally, the *School of Oncology* will provide education and training for natural scientists and medical researchers in the area of translational cancer research at the highest level.

In November last year, an internationally staffed expert committee selected the partnering sites for the consortium. DKFZ will have the function of a core center and will contribute, jointly with Heidelberg University Hospitals, the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg to the consortium. The selected partnering sites are:

- Charité Comprehensive Cancer Center, Berlin University Medicine
- University Cancer Center, University Hospitals Carl Gustav Carus, Dresden Technical University

- West German Cancer Center, Essen University Hospitals
- University Center for Tumor Diseases, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Hospitals, Frankfurt
- Ludwig Heilmeyer Tumor Center – Comprehensive Cancer Center Freiburg, Freiburg University Hospitals
- Munich University Hospitals, Munich Technical University Hospitals
- Southwest German Tumor Center – Comprehensive Cancer Center, Tuebingen University Hospitals

Otmar D. Wiestler is looking forward to the collaboration and is convinced that the consortium will be successful. “Together with these top-class partners we will be able to achieve substantial improvements for cancer patients in numerous areas of cancer research and cancer medicine.”

Once the consortium has been established, the university partners can apply for additional project funding by German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe) which will be approved after evaluation. “This funding program is an indispensable contribution by German Cancer Aid to the consortium,” said Wiestler.

The German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research is one of four German Centers for Health Research. This is an initiative by the German government intended to support the nationwide strategic collaboration of the best scientists and clinicians in studying the most widespread diseases of the nation. The model is based on equal partnerships between a non-university center and universities or university hospitals.

Already in 2009, the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases and the German Center for Diabetes Research were founded. These were the first centers to successfully implement the model of national centers.

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ), employing over 2,500 staff members, is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. More than 1,000 scientists are working to investigate the mechanisms of cancer development, identify cancer risk factors and develop new strategies for better cancer prevention, more precise diagnosis and effective treatment of cancer patients. In addition, the staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) provides information about this widespread disease for patients, their families, and the general public. DKFZ is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (90%) and the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg (10%) and is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers.

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