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Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel visits the German Cancer Research Center

"50 years of DKFZ are 50 years of high-end research. My visit today is not the first time that I have heard of this institute, but I am very pleased to be here now for the first time," said Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel in her address to employees and honorary guests of the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ).

Chancellor Merkel visited the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) on the occasion of the institute's 50th anniversary. "Your visit is a wonderful birthday present for us, a splendid opening event for our anniversary year," said Otmar Wiestler, Chairman of the Management Board and Scientific Director of the DKFZ, to welcome the Chancellor. Wiestler and the DKFZ's Administrative Commercial Director Josef Puchta, along with former DKFZ Chairman and Nobel Prize Laureate Harald zur Hausen, greeted the Chancellor and accompanied her on a tour of the institute.

After signing the guestbook, Merkel visited two laboratories at the DKFZ: At the Division of Molecular Metabolic Control, she heard an explanation of the way lifestyle factors and malnutrition can lead to disruptions in a person's metabolism and eventually even to cancer. At the Division of Stem Cells and Cancer, researchers demonstrated how they use an analyzer to isolate cancer cells with stem cell properties from a mixture of cancer cells. Many cancers and their metastases are thought to originate from such tumor stem cells.

Subsequently, the Chancellor talked to a group of young male and female scientists: PhD students and junior researchers from various countries including the USA, Canada and Japan. They explained why the DKFZ is an attractive employer for talented young scientists from around the world: With its outstanding researchers and excellent infrastructure, the Center occupies a leading position in international cancer research. Other topics of the 30-minute conversation included equal opportunities and issues of combining family life with a career in science. Impressed by the talk, Chancellor Merkel said afterwards: "One can feel that you take the promotion of young scientists seriously, and that women have a chance here. My visit has convinced me that I don't have to worry about the up-and-coming generation at this institute."

The highlight and finale of the Chancellor's visit was her speech to more than one thousand invited guests and employees of the DKFZ. It was preceded by words from DKFZ Chairman and Scientific Director Otmar Wiestler giving thanks for five decades of federal funding for the German Cancer Research Center. "The money has been well invested. Five decades of research at the DKFZ have done much good for people," said Wiestler. "Our findings have helped to prevent thousands of cancer cases, to improve treatment and in many cases to detect cancer earlier. What is more: Money invested in research is money invested in Germany's future."

Concluding her speech, the Chancellor promised: "The international spirit is alive at this institute and guarantees its scientific excellence. I will stay committed to ensuring that the DKFZ can provide the right framework conditions for this."

A picture for this press release is available at:

http://www.dkfz.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2014/bilder/DKFZ_BK_Merkel.jpg

Source: Tobias Schwendt, DKFZ

Caption: Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel with DKFZ's Administrative-Commercial Director Josef Puchta (left) and Chairman and Scientific Director Otmar Wiestler (right). Far left: Theresia Bauer, Minister of Science, Research and the Arts of the State of Baden-Württemberg; far right: Harald zur Hausen.

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.

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