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Multi-talented Jack of all trades, miracle healer or the root of all evil?

European Stem Cell Day took place in Germany for the first time – Heidelberg was part of it!

On March 11, an unusual subject was on the agenda: Stem cells. More than 1000 high school students in eight German cities visited Institutes and Universities on a quest for stem cells in research and medicine. In Heidelberg, the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), the University Hospital and the University opened their doors for talks and lab visits. The idea is a European one: More than 25,000 young people set out on UniStem Day in Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Sweden, Poland Serbia, Denmark and for the first time in Germany, to find out more about this Jack of all trades in the world of cells.

On Friday 11 March, the DKFZ welcomed around 200 high school students through its doors. In talks, videos, tours around the labs, in discussions and direct conversations with the experts, they learned about various aspects of current basic research, ethical questions, and potential medical application of stem cells, as well as various career options in biomedicine. Beside the Life Science Lab and DKFZ scientists, some other groups also participated. These came from the stem cell institute HI-STEM, the Center for Organismal Studies (COS) of the University, the University Hospital, as well as the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) in Heidelberg.

The aim of UniStem Day is to introduce young students to the current state and the potential of stem cell research. Stem cell research is developing so rapidly that it's impossible to represent it in the current school curriculum. UniStem Day is designed to stimulate curiosity, raise questions and provide information. Having started as a project by the University of Milan in 2009, in its 8th year UniStem Day now comprises 73 universities in 51 European cities with over 400 speakers and more than 25,000 participants. Germany's participation was initiated by the German Stem Cell Network* (GSCN), who also acted as a central coordinating body.

An image for this press release is available at

www.dkfz.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2016/bilder/unistem-day-2016.jpg

Legend: High school students were given a glimpse of stem cell research on UniStem Day.

Source: Uwe Anspach, DKFZ

*The German Stem Cell Network (GSCN) is a network association aiming to create synergies between all areas of applied and basic stem cell research, and to provide an interface between science, education, politics and society as a whole. The central task of the GSCN is to pool the expertise in stem cell research in Germany and develop synergies between basic research, regenerative medicine and pharmacology. The initiative will promote innovative research activities on a national and international level. In addition, targeted information and events will be offered to encourage the public discourse on stem cell research.

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 3,000 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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