

Joining Forces to Fight Cancer – Seven New Clinical Partners for the German Cancer Research Center

The German Ministry of Education and Research today announced its preliminary decision about the partners in the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research. The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) will function as a core center collaborating with excellent university cancer centers at seven partnering sites.

“In the fight against cancer, it is crucial to combine excellent research with innovative cancer medicine,” said Professor Dr. Otmar D. Wiestler, DKFZ’s Scientific Director. This conviction has motivated the joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe) and the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) to create the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research. The consortium is designed to contribute to a more rapid translation of current research results into patient care. “Thanks to the long-term alliance of DKFZ with strong university partners, Germany will play a substantial role in the international concert of translational cancer research in the future,” said Wiestler.

Seventeen university hospitals had applied as partnering sites. 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 pleased about the committee’s decision: “These partners complement our own range of research in an excellent way. Within the consortium we now have bundled the scientific and clinical competence needed to achieve improvements for the patients in the important types of cancer.” Wiestler highly commends the work done by the expert committee: “The experts have done an impressive job to select the partners for the consortium in the short time that was available.”

Jointly with the future partners, an overall concept will now be elaborated to show how this collaboration will create added value in research and cancer medicine. Following another review of this concept by the expert committee, the final decision will be taken in the first quarter of 2011. BMBF will provide medium-term financing of € 30 million annually. Once the consortium has established itself, Deutsche Krebshilfe will provide additional funds for the university partners. These funds will be provided for defined research projects within the

context of the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research following an application and appraisal procedure. "With this support program, Deutsche Krebshilfe is making an indispensable contribution to the consortium," Wiestler emphasized.

The German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research is one of six Centers of Excellence in health research to be established in Germany. This is a program by the German government intended to support the nationwide strategic collaboration of the best scientists and clinicians in studying the most widespread diseases of our 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 implement the model of core centers and decentralized partnering sites. Besides the composition of the Consortium for Translational Cancer Research, other decisions taken last week included the locations for the German Center for Lung Research, the German Center for Infection Research and the German Center for Cardio-Vascular Research.

In addition to its designation as core center in the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research, DKFZ also contributes substantially to the Heidelberg partnering sites in the German Center for Lung Research, the German Center for Infection Research and the German Center for Cardio-Vascular Research. Otmar Wiestler is pleased: "Here we benefit from the close partnerships that we are maintaining by now with Heidelberg's university medicine in many areas." Professor Dr. Dr. h. c. Ruediger Siewert, Medical Director of Heidelberg University Hospitals, added: "For university medicine in Heidelberg, participation in four consortia is an outstanding achievement which impressively confirms Heidelberg's position as a leading biomedical site."

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany and is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers. More than 2,200 staff members, including 1,000 scientists, are investigating the mechanisms of cancer and are working to identify cancer risk factors. They provide the foundations for developing novel approaches in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer. In addition, the staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. The Center is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (90%) and the State of Baden-Württemberg (10%).

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