



Press Release

Cancer Research Consortium "IMMUNO-TRANSPORTER" funded by Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Mainz, Heidelberg, Stuttgart June 2015 – The newly established "IMMUNO-TRANSPORTER" consortium will collaborate to develop innovative approaches in the field of cancer immunotherapy. The collaboration is made possible through funding by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the program "Efficient drug delivery in biological systems – BioMatVital: BioTransporter" totalling 3.8 million euros over the course of three years. The five consortium partners are all internationally recognized for their successful outstanding efforts in the field of immunology and cancer research. BioNTech AG, the coordinator of the consortium, and Ganymed Pharmaceuticals AG are both located in Mainz and support the collaboration as industry partners. The Institute for Translational Oncology at the University Medical Center Mainz (TRON gGmbH), the Heidelberg University Hospital and the Institute of Cell Biology and Immunology at the University of Stuttgart (IZI) are academic partners.

As cancer is still one of the leading causes for morbidity and mortality worldwide, there is a high medical, social and economic need for new therapy approaches. Conventional cancer therapies often fail as tumors initially responding to chemotherapy or radiation become resistant to the therapy after repeated treatment. The problem of resistance has led to the development of immunotherapy approaches. The concepts pursued by the consortium modulate the tumor microenvironment and exploit secondary effects of the immune response to attack cancerous cells. Similar immunomodulatory approaches have shown promising results. However, research and development is required to improve the novel technologies and to overcome remaining obstacles such as the unspecific activation of the immune system.

The consortium's objective is to develop, improve and optimize immunomodulatory concepts and to overcome their current limitations. The consortium partners will jointly develop methods to achieve tumor-specific activation of a patient's immune system to make it recognize, target and fight cancer. With a novel class of effector molecules and new tailored drug delivery strategies, the consortium strives for increased efficacy and improved tolerability of cancer immunotherapies. Based on the preclinical results, the novel approach shall eventually be translated into clinical trials.

Funding for staff, material and investments as well as for third-party service providers (e.g. GLP-studies, GMP manufacturing and clinical translation) is secured for a period of three consecutive years. The administration of the BMBF-funded project is managed by the Verband Deutscher Ingenieure (VDI, Düsseldorf).

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About the consortium

BioNTech AG

BioNTech AG (Biopharmaceutical New Technologies) is a spin-off of the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz. As a holding with six subsidiaries, BioNTech researches and develops novel vaccination technologies to boost the body's immune system for the targeted treatment of numerous cancers. The company possesses a number of cancer-specific target structures and uses proprietary technology platforms to develop drugs that are specifically directed against these target structures. More information about BioNTech can be found at www.biontech.de.

Ganymed Pharmaceuticals AG

Ganymed Pharmaceuticals AG is a private company founded in 2001 as a spin-off from the Universities of Mainz and Zurich to develop a new class of therapeutic drugs called Ideal Monoclonal Antibodies (IMABs) against cancer. IMABs are unique in that they are highly selective for proteins which are present on tumor cells, but do not bind to healthy cells. This unmatched tumor cell specificity makes IMABs cancer cell selective allowing them to efficiently kill tumor cells without harming normal healthy tissues. The company has several development programs. The lead program, IMAB362, is in advanced Phase 2 testing for gastroesophageal cancer. IMAB362 binds to the tight junction protein Claudin-18.2 which is expressed in high medical need cancers indications. For further information, please visit us at: www.ganymed.ag.

TRON gGmbH - Institute for Translational Oncology at the University Medical Center Mainz

TRON, or Translational Oncology at the University Medical Center of the Johannes Gutenberg University, is located in Mainz, Germany, and is a not-for-profit limited liability company (LLC) company based at that prestigious university. It is a biopharmaceutical research organization that pursues new diagnostics and drugs for the immunotherapeutic treatment of cancer and other severe diseases with high medical need. TRON was founded specifically to accelerate knowledge transfer from basic research into clinical applications. With its core competencies of highly specialized technologies and methods, TRON supports academic institutions, biotech companies and the pharmaceutical industry in the development of innovative products. TRON is financially supported by the Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate. More information about TRON can be found at www.tron-mainz.de.

Heidelberg University Hospital and Medical Faculty

Internationally recognized patient care, research, and teaching

Heidelberg University Hospital is one of the largest and most prestigious medical centers in Germany. The Medical Faculty of Heidelberg University belongs to the internationally most renowned biomedical research institutions in Europe. Both institutions have the common goal of developing new therapies and implementing them rapidly for patients. With about 12,600 employees, training and qualification is an important issue. Every year, around 66,000 patients are treated on a fully or partially inpatient basis and over 1,000,000 patients have been treated on an outpatient basis in more than 50 clinics and departments with 1,900 beds. Currently, about 3,500 future physicians are studying in Heidelberg; the reform Heidelberg Curriculum Medicinale (HeiCuMed) is one of the top medical training programs in Germany. For more information about Heidelberg University Hospital, please visit www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de.

Institute of Cell Biology and Immunology at the University of Stuttgart - IZI

The IZI is one of the Research Institutes of University of Stuttgart. IZI develops an intense and cutting-edge activity of translational research in cell biology and immunotherapy of cancer. Specifically, the Biomedical Engineering group of Prof. Kontermann has a strong, internationally recognized expertise in antibody engineering. Together with a group led by Prof. Pfizenmaier, an expert in cytokine biology, new protein therapeutics with tumor-targeted activity are developed at IZI. These strategies are based on the use of specific ligands to target various potent cytotoxic effector mechanisms or immune stimulating cytokines towards the tumor. Find out more about IZI at www.uni-stuttgart.de/izi.