EU-Project „Novel molecular diagnostic tools for the prevention and diagnosis of pancreatic cancer (MolDiag-Paca)"

Coordinator:

Prof. Dr. med. T. M. Gress

KLINIK FÜR INNERE MEDIZIN - GASTROENTEROLOGIE, STOFFWECHSEL UND ENDOKRINOLOGIE

Baldingerstraße, 35043 Marburg

Postal Address: D-35033 Marburg, Germany

Press Release

Malignant tumours of the pancreas, known as pancreatic carcinomas, remain among the most serious challenges in modern medicine. Although not among the most common tumours, they are among the most frequent causes of cancer-related deaths, with approximately 10,000 victims per year in Germany alone. The reasons are manifold: the tumours grow very aggressively, spreading to surrounding tissues and distant organs early on in the course of the disease. Also, they respond poorly to chemotherapeutics, leading to average survival times of pancreatic cancer patients of only 4 to 6 months after diagnosis. The only potentially curative treatment option is the surgical resection of the tumour in a very early, i.e. pre-metastatic stage. This, however, is severely hampered by the fact that symptoms usually develop rather late in the course of the disease and that the pancreas is poorly accessible to conventional diagnostic procedures due to its anatomical location in the abdomen. As a result, the proportion of pancreatic cancer patients who are successsfully cured from the disease remains well below 5 %, a devastating situation which has essentially not improved over the last decades.

Within the context of its Sixth Framework Programme, the European Union is now funding a joint research initiative of 18 research groups from 6 EU member states, who have teamed up under the coordination of Prof. Dr. T.M. Gress (University of Marburg, Germany) to develop innovative strategies for the early and accurate diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. With the advent of modern high-throughput technologies, information about genetic changes in manifest as well as developing pancreatic tumours has rapidly accumulated in recent years. It is the goal of this consortium to translate this knowledge into novel, clinically useful diagnostic procedures. To this end, the research initiative integrates resources and expertise of leading experts in clinical research, basic research, technology development and pharmaceutical research in seven closely coordinated main projects with a total budget of 8.5 million Euros over a 3 year funding period. The focus of the research work will be the development of novel biochemical assays and imaging techniques aimed at sensitively detecting specific biomolecules which are characteristically altered in their abundance and/or molecular structure in malignant pancreatic tumours.

Participating institutions:

- Philipps-University Marburg, Germany
- University of Ulm, Germany
- University of Liverpool, UK
- Queen Mary University of London, UK
- German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), Heidelberg, Germany
- Fundació IMIM, Barcelona, Spain
- University of Verona, Italy
- University of Bochum, Germany
- Schering AG, Berlin, Germany
- University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany
- Cyclacel Ltd, Dundee, UK
- University Hospital Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel, Germany
- Tepnel Life Sciences PLC, Manchester, UK
- Westfälische Wilhelms-University Münster, Germany
- Advalytix AG, Brunnthal, Germany
- Asper Biotech, Tartu, Estonia
- Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden
- Leibniz-Institut für Molekulare Pharmakologie (FMP), Berlin, Germany