SWISS BRIDGE

INVEST IN CANCER RESEARCH WORLDWIDE

PRESS RELEASE

Cancer Research Award for Two Clinical Trials

Zurich, 22.10.2024 – Two researchers from Germany and Switzerland have been awarded the SWISS BRIDGE Award 2024 for their innovative research projects. Each will receive prize money of 250,000 Swiss francs to support two clinical trials investigating promising new approaches in cancer treatment using immunotherapies.

Clinical trials are essential for developing new medical treatments and testing their efficacy and safety. Especially for hard-to-treat diseases like cancer, it is crucial to test new approaches as early as possible, so that innovative therapies can be made available more quickly to the patients who need them most.

This year's call for the SWISS BRIDGE Foundation's cancer research award focused on supporting early-phase clinical trials. In these early trials, Phases I and II, a new drug or therapy is tested for the first time in patients with incurable cancers. These studies are the first step in achieving potential treatment breakthroughs and paving the way for further studies in later phases.

Two Immunotherapy Studies Win the Award

A total of 36 young researchers from across Europe applied for the SWISS BRIDGE Award 2024. In a two-stage evaluation process, a distinguished jury prioritized two research projects. Prof. Dr. Juliane Walz from the University Hospital Tübingen and PD Dr. Tobias Weiss from the University Hospital Zurich will each receive 250,000 Swiss francs to conduct their clinical trials, which explore promising new approaches in immunotherapy for hard-to-treat cancers.

An Innovative Antibody Against Metastatic Cancer

At the heart of Prof. Walz's study is the investigation of a bispecific antibody. This antibody, developed by Professors Helmut Salih and Gundram Jung in Tübingen, is designed to specifically bind to two different proteins located on different cell types. One protein is found on the surface of immune cells, known as T-cells, and activates them. The other protein is present on both tumor cells and in surrounding tissue and blood vessels, allowing the antibody to target both structures. The researchers expect this dual action to lead to a particularly effective attack on the tumor.

The goal of the clinical trial is to test the safety and efficacy of the antibody in patients with metastatic cancers of the upper gastrointestinal tract, breast, and sarcomas. “This new bispecific antibody has the potential to trigger a more precise and effective immune response against cancer,” says Prof. Walz. “We hope to offer a new treatment option for patients who currently have limited options.”

Pioneering Study on Brain Tumors

Dr. Weiss's team is investigating a new immunotherapeutic approach for recurrent glioblastoma, the most common and aggressive form of brain tumor in adults. In this therapy, immune cells are extracted from the patient's blood, modified, and altered so they can recognize and attack tumor cells. Unlike conventional methods that focus on T-cells and take several weeks to produce, this approach uses a broader range of immune cells that are collected, modified, and re-infused into patients on the same day. Another innovation of this method is the use of mRNA technology to modify these cells. “Our approach could lead to safer, more cost-effective, and faster treatments than currently available options,” says Dr. Weiss. The concept of this study is unique worldwide and could also pave the way for treating other types of cancer.

The SWISS BRIDGE Foundation has raised over 45 million Swiss francs for global cancer research over the past 27 years, investing in innovative and high-quality research projects. In addition, the SWISS BRIDGE Award, with at least 500,000 Swiss francs awarded annually, is one of the most prestigious awards for groundbreaking cancer research and enjoys significant national and international recognition.

For more information contact:

Philipp Lücke
CEO
SWISS BRIDGE Foundation
Tel. +41 76 501 55 52
p.luecke@swissbridge.ch
www.swissbridge.ch