

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Award for Research on Immuno-oncology Biomarkers**

**Zurich, 24.10. 2018 – This year’s Swiss Bridge Award goes to two research groups; one from Spain and one from Switzerland. Awarded CHF 250 000 each, both groups continue looking for characteristic cancer features which can predict treatment success of immunotherapies.**

Immunotherapies, such as checkpoint inhibitors – whose discoverers won this year’s Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine – raise hope and are promising, because they can sometimes also cure patients with advanced-stage cancers. However, immunotherapies are also cause for frustration because they often fail, with only about 20% of the treated patients responding to these types of therapies. Medical science does not yet know in advance with whom these therapies will work.

**Two-stage evaluation process**

With this year’s call, the Swiss Bridge Foundation invited researchers under the age of 45 to close this knowledge gap. A total of 111 scientists from all over Europe applied for the Swiss Bridge Award 2018. The jury of respected experts used a two-stage evaluation process to finally select two projects. Today, the two project leaders, Ping-Chih Ho, from the Ludwig Cancer Center, University of Lausanne, Switzerland, and Rodrigo de Almeida Toledo, from the Vall d’Hebron Institute of Oncology in Barcelona, Spain, each receive CHF 250 000, for the realization of their research projects.

**Immunologically cold and hot tumors**

Ping-Chih Ho’s team is interested in the difference between tumors referred to as cold and hot tumors. While immunotherapies usually work well on hot tumors, they fail to work on cold tumors, because the cold tumor’s surrounding environment apparently prevents immune cells from migrating into the tumor tissue and exerting their effect there. Recently, Ho and his team discovered a gene that is only active in hot tumors. In mice, the researchers even managed to activate the gene in cold tumors – and thus make the tumor environment accessible again to cancer-fighting immune cells. Now, this team of researchers would like to find out if the gene plays such a similar crucial role in humans – and shall perhaps develop a test to predict the answer to successful immunotherapy.

**Genomic analysis**

The research project of Rodrigo de Almeida Toledo and his team is about collecting samples from patients in Barcelona who have been treated with a variety of different immunotherapies. Genomic analysis – that is, the comparison of the entire genome in tumors of patients who respond well to therapy and that of genetic material in tumors which continue to grow despite the treatment – is intended to uncover differences that will not only inform the prediction of the response to immunotherapy that could be used in the future, but perhaps also provide a clue to possible new targets in the fight against tumors.

*The Swiss Bridge Foundation was founded with the support of the Swiss Cancer League, over 20 years ago. Its goal is to financially support high-quality research projects in the fight against cancer, with the help of private donors and foundations. Since the Foundation’s inception, Swiss Bridge has received more than 30 million Swiss francs and has been supporting research projects in Belgium, Brazil, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Spain and Switzerland.*

**For more information, please contact:**

**Information about the Foundation: Information about Research Projects:**Philipp Lücke Dr. Peggy Janich
CEO Head of Research Funding
Swiss Bridge Foundation Swiss Cancer League
Tel. +41 (0)76 501 55 52 Tel. +41 (0)31 389 93 63
p.luecke@swissbridge.ch peggy.janich@krebsliga.ch

[www.swissbridge.ch](http://www.swissbridge.ch) [www.krebsliga.ch](http://www.krebsliga.ch)