

Joint BioRN and Ci3 Annual Conference at Merck in Darmstadt

Darmstadt, October 26, 2018

The BioRN Life Science Cluster Rhine-Neckar in Heidelberg and the Cluster for Individualized ImmunIntervention (Ci3) in Mainz were the organizers of yesterday's Joint BioRN & Ci3 Annual Conference titled "Immunotherapy and beyond – The next generation of cancer treatment". 200 participants – members and partners of both clusters and other invited guests - gathered in Darmstadt at the premises of the host Merck to share knowledge about the latest research on cancer immunotherapy.

The participants from academia and industry enjoyed a high-quality program. In addition to the opening lecture by Luciano Rossetti, Global Head of Research and Development in Merck's biopharmaceutical business, presentations included keynote lectures by Ugur Sahin, Managing Director Science and Research of the translational oncology institute TRON in Mainz, and Neil Gallagher, Head of Global Oncology Development at AbbVie. All in all, 14 scientists from research institutes, SMEs and large corporations - all of them members or partners of the two clusters - presented their latest research findings on therapeutic vaccination, cellular therapies, combination therapies or novel agents.

The breaks between the lectures were an excellent opportunity for the participants to gain insight into the competencies of other cluster partners and initiate new collaborations during the poster exhibition. This was exactly what BioRN and Ci3 had in mind when they planned the Joint Cluster Conference – to promote the knowledge exchange in cancer immunotherapy and foster cooperation among the cluster partners across regional borders.

The first Joint BioRN and Ci3 Conference was dedicated to cancer immunotherapy for two reasons: Firstly, current cancer research efforts focus on using the body's own immune system to treat tumors. And secondly, both clusters are committed to fostering research, development and manufacturing of individual cancer immunotherapies and connecting relevant research institutes and companies in their respective region.

Since the two clusters share similar goals and partners, the executive boards of BioRN and Ci3 had decided as early as 2017 to intensify their cooperation. Therefore, they initiated the joint "Health Axis Europe Partnering (HAEP)" project at the beginning of this year. This project, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), aims at developing a concept to support the technology transfer between academic research, start-ups and SMEs on the one hand, and large corporations in the health industry on the other hand.

"In order to be successful, the "Health Axis Europe Partnering" project needs to attract a large number of innovative projects, something that distinguishes the project from other scouting initiatives. Connecting the partners of the Health Axis Europe initiative with the national partners Ci3, M²OLIE and Mannheim University allows us to access a comprehensive network of innovators for our HAEP scouting. We have believed for quite a while that collaboration and transfer should not stop at regional borders. It therefore makes sense for us to closely cooperate with Ci3 beyond the HAEP project", said Gitte Neubauer, Chair of BioRN.

Özlem Türeci, 1st Chair of Ci3, added: "The Joint Conference marks another milestone in our quest to enhance cooperation between our two clusters. Cancer immunotherapy is a central issue of both Ci3 and BioRN, and the two clusters have an excellent expertise in this field. It's long past time for us to connect our experts in this field to initiate collaborations that will ultimately benefit the patients. The

Joint Cluster Conference provides an ideal opportunity for achieving this goal. We are more than delighted that Merck and the other sponsors support us in our endeavor.”

Merck, a leading science and technology company that also focuses on the development of innovative immune therapeutics for the treatment of cancer, has been a long-term partner and supporter of both cluster organizations and their goals. Ulrich Betz, leader of the science and technology workstream of Merck’s 350th anniversary, had invited both clusters for their first joint conference to Merck’s corporate headquarters in Darmstadt on the occasion of the company’s 350th anniversary.



Özlem Türeci Chair of Ci3 and Michael Boutros vice Chair of BioRN during the closing remarks

BioRN Life Science Cluster Rhine-Neckar

BioRN is a life science research and industry cluster dedicated to the development of cell-specific, molecular and personalised innovative treatments. The BioRN Cluster stands for the development, networking, representation and promotion of the life science region into one of the leading life science clusters in Europe. The cluster members include renowned academic research institutions such as the University of Heidelberg, the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), and global health care companies such as AbbVie, Boehringer Ingelheim, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Roche and Sanofi-Aventis, and about 80 small and medium-sized biotech enterprises. Beyond the members registered in the cluster, BioRN gives access to a wider network via partnerships and collaborations. In terms of the use of clusters for the internationalization of companies, BioRN has founded, together with Leuven (Belgium), Maastricht (Netherlands) and Copenhagen (Denmark), an alliance for the enforcement of biomedical innovation in Europe, called the Health Axis Europe.

Cluster for Individualized ImmuneIntervention (Ci3)

The Cluster for Individualized ImmuneIntervention (Ci3) promotes the development of innovative individualized immunotherapies and diagnostics for serious illnesses such as cancer. It is located in the

Rhine-Main area, a region with one of Europe's longest and most successful histories in pharmaceutical innovation. During the last years, Ci3 has established an outstanding network of more than 100 partners including large companies, SMEs and academic institutions with strong immunological expertise and long-standing experience in all aspects of pharmaceutical product development. By combining the cluster players' expertise and fostering their networking, Ci3 could achieve nationally as well as internationally acknowledged progress in the field of individualized immunotherapy. In order to further improve the framework conditions for the development of immunotherapies and to generate long-term benefits, Ci3 is in constant dialogue with various stakeholders of the healthcare sector (e.g. patients, physicians, payers, healthcare providers and manufacturers). For its members and partners, the cluster offers different services such as networking events, workshops, acquisition of funds, project coordination and innovation scouting.