

Press release

An iconic building to mark the launch of the new Swiss Cancer Centre – Lausanne.

Lausanne, 15 January 2013 – The ISREC Foundation and its partners, CHUV, UNIL and EPFL, today unveiled the layout and blueprint of the new cancer centre. It was Behnisch of Stuttgart who won the tender for the parallel studies mandate for the design and construction of the translational oncology centre. Located on the CHUV site, the future AGORA – Cancer Centre will be the key component of the new Swiss Cancer Centre Lausanne, whose governance will be jointly provided by the CHUV, UNIL, EPFL and the ISREC Foundation. A letter of intent has also been signed by the 4 institutions, laying down the common vision for research into cancer. The AGORA – Cancer Centre will be able to accommodate 400 researchers and clinicians on 11,500 m² as early as 2016.

The AGORA - Cancer Centre exists specifically to bring together scientists and practitioners under one roof as part of a community of expertise. Created as a gigantic “toolbox” in the fight against cancer, the interactive, integrated AGORA centre allows everyone to draw on the pool of resources available in an effort to combat the disease: ground-breaking progress in understanding the mechanisms specific to each pathology, optimized management of targeted therapies, networking of advances benefiting patients under treatment. ‘Bringing together doctors, researchers and bio-engineers under one roof will stimulate collaborative efforts that will lead to major breakthroughs in therapeutic strategies aimed at cancer sufferers’, stated enthusiastically Professor Georges Coukos, Head of the oncology department at CHUV and Director of the Ludwig Centre at Lausanne University.

Behnisch Architekten: an iconic building dedicated to tomorrow’s research

‘Both interdisciplinary and disciplinary communication as the central element of successful research will be evident in the organization of the floor plans. Communication plays a central role both inside and outside the entire building,’ commented prize-winning architect, Stefan Behnisch, at the opening of the competition exhibition on CHUV premises today. The agora, the public level of the Cancer Research Center, connects as well to the existing pathways of the campus and beyond as internally, within the building to the laboratory and office levels with their individual communication areas and informal workplaces.

The internal organization of the programmatic areas offers the users a high level of flexibility to provide the necessary freedom for future changes.

The building skin is designed to enhance daylight use in the depth of the building. In specific areas operable windows allow for natural ventilation. This provides for a better individual climate control. The daylight enhancement systems, optimized sunlight protection, a responsible management of natural resources in the construction and maintenance of the building, as well as the use of both renewable and the existing energy systems on the site, are the preconditions for a successful and sustainable working environment. This, together with the outstanding research goals will create the future oriented image for the new facility.

The SCCL – Swiss Cancer Center Lausanne

Many rich and complementary collaborations have long existed between the researchers at UNIL and EPFL and the clinicians at CHUV. The creation of the SCCL formally marks the ambition of three major Institutions to pool and co-ordinate their different areas of expertise in the field of oncology and improve the synergies between fundamental researchers and clinicians. The goal? To bring to the bedside as soon as possible the new treatments to emerge from this coordinated research.

50% of the project's financing already guaranteed

The AGORA – Cancer Centre is a project implemented by the ISREC Foundation and a number of partner institutions with a budget of 70 million Swiss Francs. The ISREC Foundation has made it possible to launch the project with an initial installment of 15 million. 'We are delighted today to see the project in motion and to have been able to unite all actors in cancer research around a common goal', stated Jean-Marc Tissot, Director of the ISREC Foundation, today, before continuing 'for the ISREC Foundation, which is celebrating its 50th birthday next year, making it possible to bring together researchers and clinicians has always been one of our priority goals.' Aside from the 15 million, two donations of 10 million each have also been bequeathed to the ISREC Foundation in support of the project. In all, the ISREC Foundation has already secured 50% of its funding.

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Additional information

The ISREC Foundation

Thanks to the motivation of its Chairman Mr Rodolphe Stadler and of its Director and co-founder Prof. Henri Isliker, the ISREC Foundation started its activity with the creation of the Swiss Institute for experimental cancer research (ISREC). Since 2008, ISREC has been divided into two distinctly independent entities. The first is the research institute, now integrated into EPFL, and the second is the Foundation recognized as being of public utility and under the supervision of the Confederation.

Behnisch Architekten

Behnisch Architekten was founded as a branch office of Behnisch & Partner in 1989 and, under the leadership of Stefan Behnisch, developed into a successful, internationally active firm. In 1991 it became independent in its partnership structure. While Günter Behnisch continued to lead his office, Behnisch and Partner, until 2005, this developed through various partnerships to become, since 2005, the architecture office called Behnisch Architekten.

In 1999, an office was opened in Los Angeles (to 2011), in 2006 another in Boston and in 2009 the Munich office was founded.

The three offices are led by Stefan Behnisch, each together with a partner. In Munich it is Robert Höfle, in Boston, Robert Matthew Noblett and in the Stuttgart office Stefan Rappold. All three offices operate together and in close collaboration, each working on their respective projects upon their own authority.

One of the office's motives is the thought that architecture has a direct influence on living quality in all areas of life. This emphasis on the social dimension is a decisive aspect of the work of Behnisch Architekten.

Related themes explored by the AGORA – Cancer Centre

The AGORA – Cancer Centre aims to address many themes related to cancer research, including: melanoma: a highly malignant cancer of the skin, glioblastoma, the most deadly form of brain cancer, lung cancer, the leading cause of death (men and women), breast cancer: the most common form of cancer in women in Switzerland, the tumor invasion and metastasis, the study of malignant cell migration, the angiogenesis, a pathological process in tumor growth and metastasis development. Please note that these themes have not been definitively decided upon.

Translational research

In oncology, many projects do not get beyond the basic research stage. Promising leads do not always, therefore, result in therapeutic solutions benefiting the patient. It is this gap that translational research sets out to bridge.

The expression “From bench to bedside” illustrates a new model that forges bonds between specialties. This type of collaboration between basic researchers, clinicians and practitioners in charge of the treatments delivered to patients creates the conditions conducive to the development of new molecules or the appearance of efficient diagnostic tests, and this is thanks to the continued checks on the relevance of the data gathered in the laboratory. Translational research ensures that newly acquired knowledge is not solely reliant upon specific typical situations, such as cell lines generating results that, although admittedly reproducible, are not directly transposable to man.

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