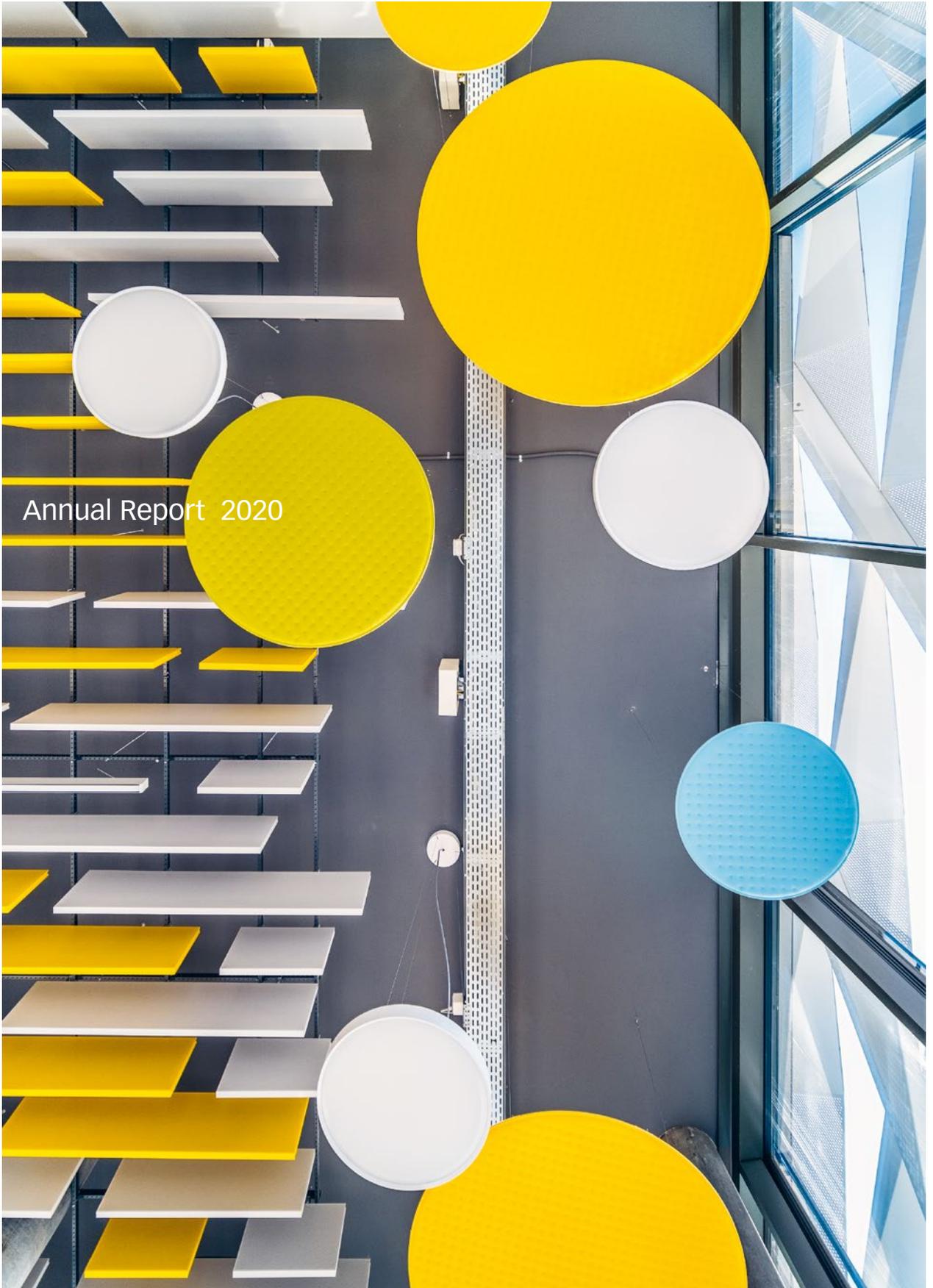


# ISREC

Fondation Recherche Cancer



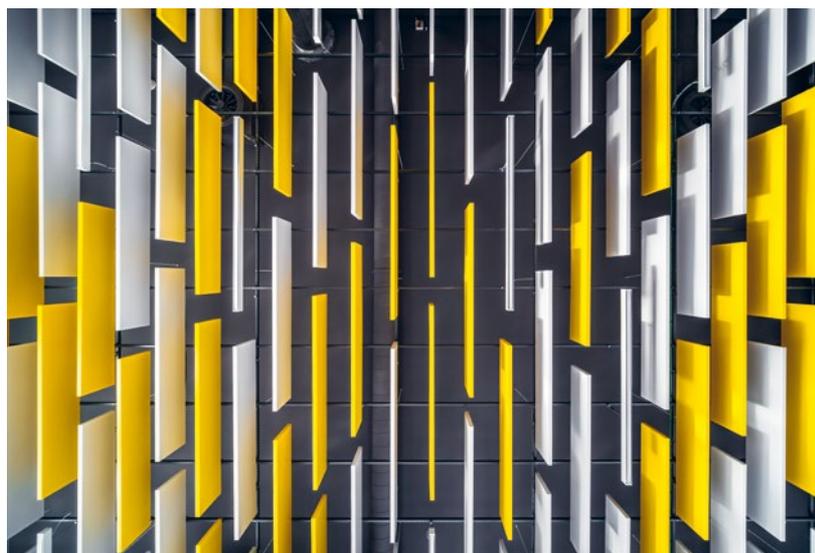
Annual Report 2020

## Acknowledgments

At the close of this year, we wish to express our sincere gratitude to all our generous donors, without whom none of our projects could have been carried out.

Special thanks to all the members of staff and to our ambassadors, Didier Grobet and Jürg Kärle, for their faithful commitment.

You all have contributed to the development and success of our Foundation, and your support is greatly appreciated. Thank you!



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## Catherine Labouchère

President



## 2020, a Pivotal Year in Many Respects

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The past year, marked by a very fruitful collaboration between the institutions of the Lake of Geneva area dedicated to cancer research (UNIL, CHUV, HUG, UNIGE, EPFL), has led to numerous shared prospects. The fact that it was possible to break down cantonal barriers is a source of pride for the Foundation. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in February/March admittedly disrupted the scientists' and labs' daily routine, but activity never ceased, and the scientific momentum was never interrupted. On the contrary, the pandemic has led to numerous new projects, partly thanks to the arrival of renowned scientists in the various institutions.

At the heart of the Foundation, preparations for the change in directorship and presidency took place under the most favorable auspices. Prof. Francis-Luc Perret, who led the entire construction of the AGORA complex with renowned expertise, retired at the end of December. The new director as of February 1, 2021 is Prof. Susan Gasser. Her widely proven scientific qualities will ensure successful development of the active scientific community working at AGORA. Prof. Philippe Eckert, new director of the CHUV, as well as Bertrand Levrat, his counterpart in Geneva, joined the Foundation Council during the year. On February 1, 2021, at the end of my statutory 12-year mandate,



I handed over the presidency to Pierre-Marie Glauser, who has been a member of the Council for the past four years. On January 1, 2021, Claudine Amstein, current director of the Vaud Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CVCI), joined the Foundation Council, which is once again complete and prepared to successfully fulfill the Foundation's missions.

I especially wish to thank Prof. Perret for his tireless commitment to AGORA. Thanks to him, this center has become a leading cancer research institution in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. I wish him all the best for his retirement. I am likewise very grateful to Aylin Niederberger, administrative and financial director of the Foundation, and to Nathalie Blanc and Isabelle Schiess, all three of them invaluable staff members, who make it possible for the Foundation to carry out its tasks.

Very special thanks go to all the people and organizations who put their donations in the hands of the Foundation, trusting that these are fully used according to their purpose.

As I leave the Foundation Council and the presidency, my gratitude goes out to all who have enabled me to accomplish this exciting task and who have made it possible for me to keep two promises: the first one was one I made to my predecessor, Yves Paternot, pledging that the AGORA center would come true. The second one was to do everything in my power to ensure that patients become an important partner in every stage of cancer research. I can now retire knowing that the Foundation is in good hands for the next stage of its development.

**Catherine Labouchère**  
President

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## Prof. Dr. Pierre-Marie Glauser

President  
(as of February 1, 2021)



## The Challenges Ahead

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It is with gratitude and enthusiasm that I took over the presidency of the ISREC Foundation on February 1, 2021, an institution established 57 years ago!

Of course, I am first and foremost grateful to Catherine Labouchère, outgoing President, and Prof. Francis-Luc Perret, outgoing Director.

Prof. Perret was the ideal person to manage the construction of the AGORA research cluster and to initiate the work of the institutions located in the center. He accompanied this huge construction site with enthusiasm, commitment, competence and resolve, enabling a smooth process and completion of the project on time and within the budget!

Thanks to her unfailing commitment and to the quality of her network in the Lake of Geneva area, Catherine Labouchère has enabled the realization of a project that is unique in Switzerland, if not in all of Europe: under a single roof are now united several institutions collaborating in the field of cancer research. Through the pooling of the efforts of three universities (UNIL, EPFL and UNIGE) and two university hospitals (CHUV and HUG), leading cancer scientists and physicians have been brought together and can now collaborate. These interactions and the contribution of the best technologies epitomize the core of the ISREC Foundation: cutting-edge translational cancer research.

The realization of this vision, first expressed by Yves Paternot, has become a reality in large part due to the efforts of Catherine Labouchère. During her presidency, every effort was made to overcome institutional and cantonal obstacles. She ensured the cohesion and smooth operation of the Foundation Council, which was unanimously committed to making the AGORA project come true. When I joined the Foundation Council four years ago, I discovered a committee composed of creative and enthusiastic individuals, willing to commit themselves to the missions of the Foundation with great conviction and generosity. Knowing that she was reaching the end of her statutory mandate, Catherine Labouchère did everything in her power to ensure a smooth transition. Accordingly, I was able to take over the presidency under the best possible conditions. Thus, I am particularly grateful to Catherine Labouchère for her support during this transitional phase and to the members of the ISREC Foundation Council for their trust. I am very pleased to be able to continue working with them to achieve the purposes of our Foundation.

**Taking over a presidency such as that of the ISREC Foundation also means rising to the challenges lying ahead.**

A main goal of the Foundation is to promote and support institutional collaborations such of those taking place within the AGORA research cluster. In this respect, the Foundation can count on a first-rate team, in particular on Aylin Niederberger who, for many years, has tended to our administrative and financial matters with great care and constant commitment. The arrival of Prof. Susan Gasser as the new director of the Foundation on February 1 is of course also an invaluable asset. Being an internationally renowned scientist, she is ideally suited to

initiate a dialogue between all the researchers working at AGORA. Her extensive Swiss and international academic networks are invaluable for future collaborations.



Another key challenge is to find the funds required to finance cancer research. The ISREC Foundation is particularly well positioned in this respect: with its high-level Scientific Board and more than half a century of experience, it is able to evaluate the projects it wishes to support and to monitor their progress. And this in turn motivates many private and institutional donors to trust and support the Foundation.

It is therefore with great enthusiasm that I take over from Catherine Labouchère. I look forward to working for the ISREC Foundation.

**Prof. Dr. Pierre-Marie Glauser**  
President

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# THE FOUNDATION'S MISSIONS

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## **Supporting Translational Research**

The ISREC Foundation identifies, selects and supports concrete projects that promote knowledge transfer and collaborations between basic research and clinical applications. The aim is to establish novel diagnostic and therapeutic approaches to study cells and their interactions with their environment. This makes it possible to act on the causes of dysfunctions leading to cancer.

## **Supporting Young Scientists**

The ISREC Foundation grants scholarships to students, PhD candidates and scientists working in the fields of biology, technology or medicine, and whose research is focused on immunology and oncology.

Founded on June 18, 1964, the ISREC Foundation is a private non-profit foundation. In the last more than 56 years, approximately 150 personalities from Switzerland and abroad, including five Nobel Prize winners, have sat on the Foundation Council or the Scientific Board of the ISREC Foundation. The Foundation has supported significant research projects and discoveries, notably

in the areas of mutagenesis, genome instability and repair, immunology, immunotherapy, the cell cycle, cell biology, tumor virology, oncogenes, cell differentiation and bioinformatics. For several decades now, research accomplished by scientists and supported by the Foundation has been contributing to a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying cancer and to the identification of novel therapeutic targets.

In 2020, true to its topmost mission, which is to support cancer research, the Foundation granted scholarships to the UNIL and EPFL doctoral programs. Funds were also allocated to several cancer research projects in various Swiss academic institutions. Some of these projects are directly dedicated to patient well-being.

The many successes that have marked the history of cancer research are encouraging results, as are the statistics of recent years. It is in this spirit that our Foundation pursues its missions.

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# Financial Contributions of the ISREC Foundation between 2008 and 2020

## Young Scientists

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**15 scholarships**

Total amount: **CHF 4 080 000.—**

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**5 professorships**

Total amount: **CHF 25 400 000.—**

## Research Projects

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**27 cancer research projects**

Total amount: **CHF 26 047 848.—**

## Conferences and Symposiums

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**35 symposiums and scientific conferences**

Total amount: **CHF 597 937.—**

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Prof.  
Susan M.  
Gasser

Director  
(as of February 1, 2021)



## New Directorate for a Foundation Serving Research

The most promising event of this new era is the appointment of Prof. **Susan M. Gasser** as the Director of the Foundation, starting in February 2021. The scientific career of this renowned biologist consolidates the message and missions of the ISREC Foundation, both from a national viewpoint and from the perspective of the French-speak-

ing part of Switzerland. Internationally recognized for her contributions in the fields of genome stability and epigenetics, Prof. Gasser follows in the footsteps of Prof. Francis-Luc Perret, who played an exceptional role by helping design and bring into existence the AGORA center.

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Having led a biomedical institute in Basel for 15 years, I returned to Lausanne, ready to sit back and enjoy the lake, mountains, and local wines. The opportunity to engage myself in leading the ISREC Foundation,

however, was a chance I could not let slip by. The ISREC Foundation has supported science-based advances that drive new cancer treatments for nearly 60 years. It has been a symbol of quality, integrity and pur-

pose: its mission has always been to support the development of improved cancer therapies and to ensure their delivery to patients. The last 20 years, with the advent of accurate and efficient genome sequencing, has seen molecular and cellular biology deliver an ever-deeper grasp of the causes, progression, and regression of cancers. Understanding the immune system and its interface with cancer, as well as the unique roles played by the tumor microenvironment, are just a few of the aspects pursued today in Lausanne, with the support the ISREC Foundation.

From harnessing the power of our innate and adaptive immune systems in the treatment of cancer, to the optimization of rapid deep radiation for FLASH cancer therapy, innovation is key to improving the survival of cancer patients. With international recognition and a rigorous scientific council, the ISREC Foundation has a unique role to play in supporting cutting-edge research that leads directly to clinical application.

Yves Paternot, former President of the ISREC Foundation Council, aspired to create an institute that would bring together a range of different disciplines in science and technology and clinicians engaged in treating cancer. He envisioned an environment in which leading researchers from different disciplines would work together, learning to speak the same language while collaborating on the improvement of cancer therapies. The ISREC Foundation, inspired by Yves Paternot, managed to build a beautiful building in the middle of Lausanne, immediately across from the CHUV, the cantonal university hospital, financed thanks to the efforts of his successor Catherine Labouchère and my predecessor Francis-Luc Perret. For the first time ever, the EPFL, UNIL, CHUV, UNIGE and HUG agreed to participate in collaborative and open research efforts aimed at translational cancer research. The mere

fact that Geneva and Lausanne are collaborating with a federal institute was enough to make me want to engage in this effort.

AGORA is a magical place: large open labs, coffee spaces for exchange, offices with views over the city, strong core facilities and a rich population of young, active scientists and medical doctors. This is a recipe for success, and I was immediately attracted to this unique environment.

The opportunities we see for making a difference in the lives of patients are tremendous and the time for action is now. The enormous advances of genomics and sequencing are increasing the diagnostic power of single- or few-cell analyses, the advances of machine learning applied to tumor samples will allow us to predict which tumors will respond to a given treatment, and the power of cell engineering will enable us to prime T cells for ever better immunological responses to cancer. Counteracting the immune checkpoint offers the possibility to harness our own bodies in the fight against cancer, while advances in microsurgery coupled with potentiating therapies such as hyperthermia may improve therapeutic effectiveness to a point that many cancers may be cured. This is the goal. And we believe the time for action – on the level of research, development, and implementation – is now. These opportunities need to be introduced into practice in our local hospitals, and the collaboration of the AGORA with the CHUV and the HUG is exemplary.

**The mission, place and time were all aligned – and I personally feel honored and enthused to take on the directorship of the ISREC Foundation!**

What distinguishes the ISREC Foundation from others engaged in philanthropic support of cancer patients? To put it in a very



few words: the ISREC Foundation has a long tradition of scientific rigor and excellence. This is embodied in a world-class Scientific Board and its president, currently Professor Franco Cavalli, head of the IOSI in Bellinzona. The Board ensures that the financial support offered by the ISREC Foundation is directed towards the most deserving efforts in the realm of research. The Scientific Board is made up of leading scientists in cancer research, namely Fabrice André, Michael N. Hall, Peter Johnson, and Anne Müller, with whom I will work closely. By reviewing and carefully following up on the progress of projects funded by the ISREC Foundation, this board ensures that investments are well spent. This makes the ISREC Foundation a preferred partner for other foundations of a philanthropic nature, and is a token of achievement for funded scientists. This tradition of supporting research of highest integrity was established in the 1990s and has stood the test of time.

As incoming Director, I have been thoroughly impressed by the dedication, energy and expertise which Prof Perret and Mme Labouchère invested in the ISREC Foundation and the AGORA building. Their commitment and skill in bringing together the major institutes of the Lake of Geneva area and enabling them to join efforts at the AGORA were exceptional. Their vision and talents are sorely missed, and we wish them the best as they take on new challenges. We would be nowhere without them, and any success we have in the future will build on the foundations they have laid. Hats off to Francis-Luc Perret and Catherine Labouchère.

**Prof. Susan M. Gasser**  
Director

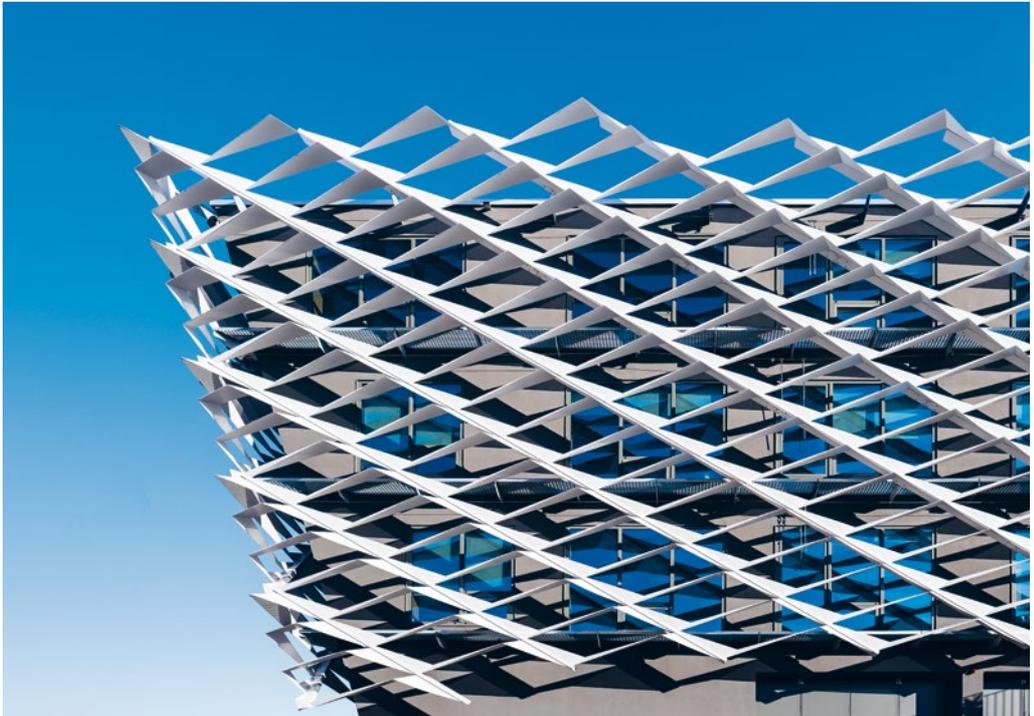
## Thank you Prof. Francis-Luc Perret!

These past seven years, Prof. Francis-Luc Perret directed the ISREC Foundation with remarkable efficiency. He expertly oversaw the realization of the AGORA – Pôle de recherche sur le cancer and meticulously respected the imposed schedule, quality and budget. He accompanied the commissioning of the building and its integration into the hospital campus, and tirelessly worked through all the minute details of the project. Today, the center inspires the scientists who work there (see interview with Prof. Mikaël Pittet on page 18) and who appreciate the interdisciplinary exchanges that take place there on a daily basis. Mission accomplished!

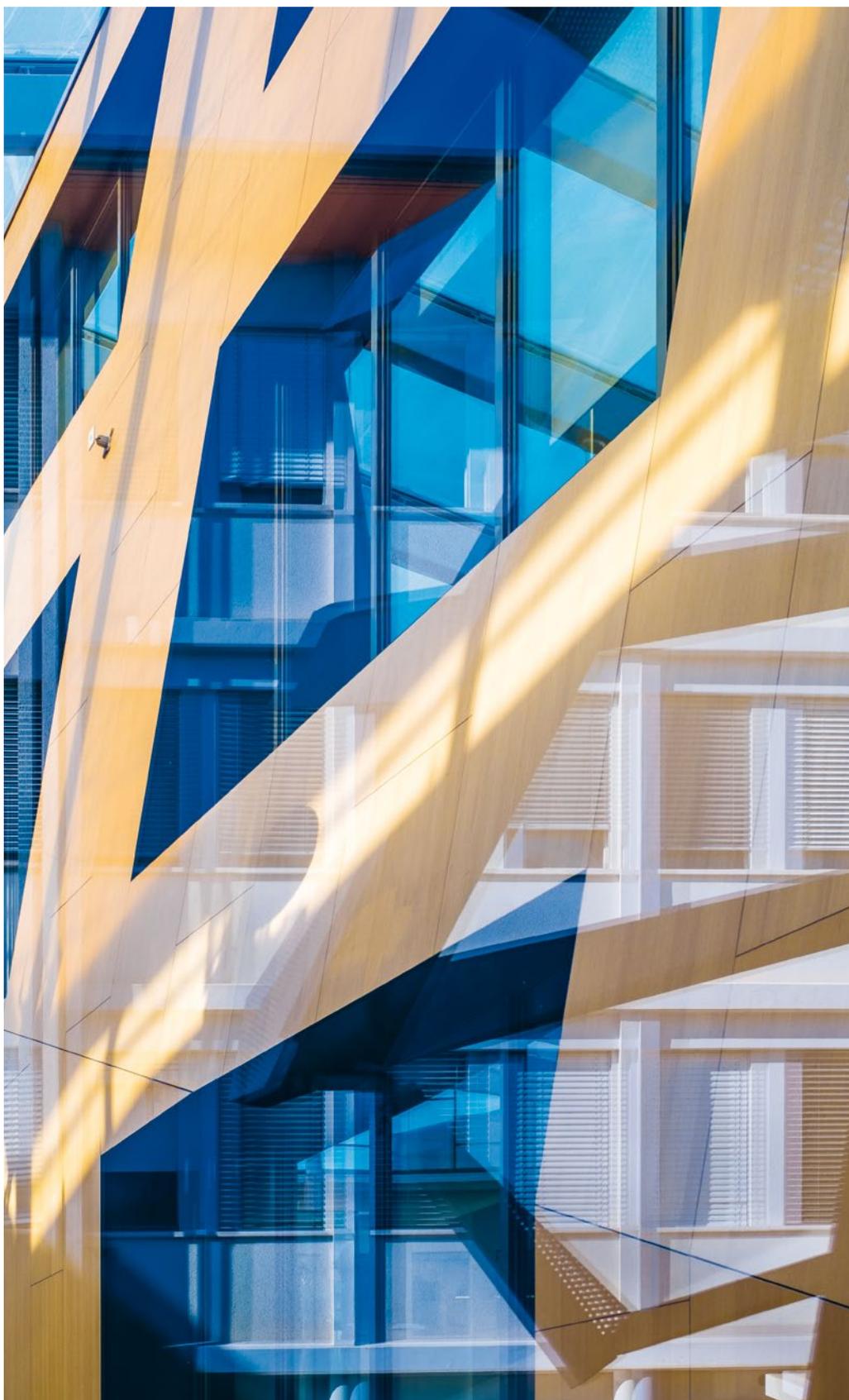


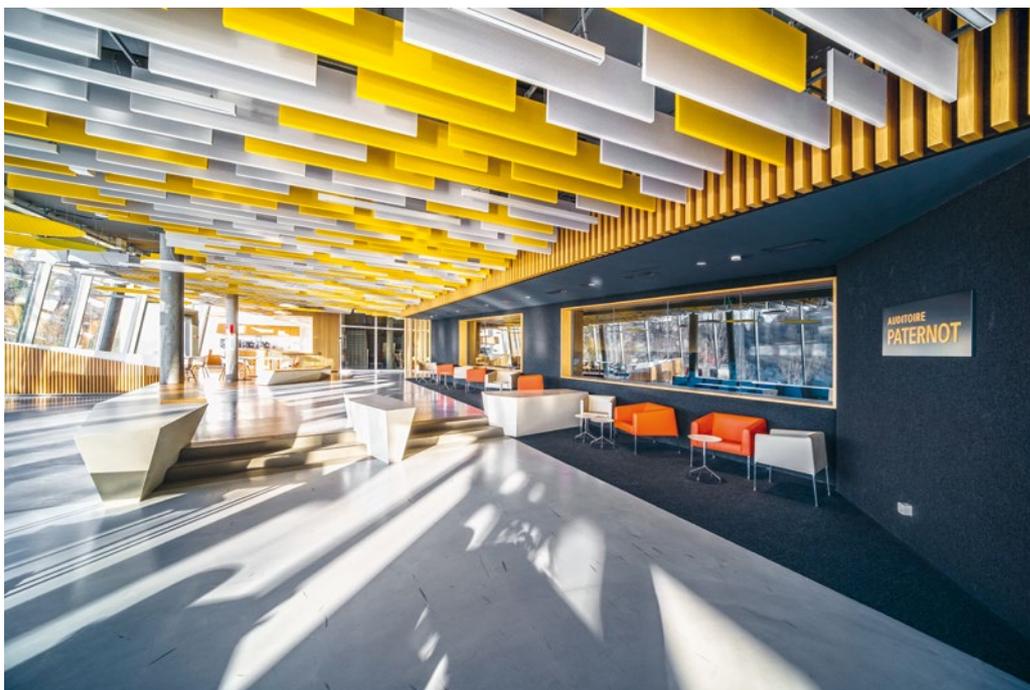
The ISREC Foundation is profoundly grateful to Prof. Perret for all this, but also for his humanity, the energy he has instilled in the scientific and technical teams, and the impact of his missions.

Thank you, Professor, and best wishes!











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# INTERVIEW WITH MIKAËL PITTET



**PROFESSOR  
MIKAËL PITTET**

**Professor at the University  
of Geneva and holder  
of the ISREC Foundation  
Oncoimmunology Chair**

After completing his doctorate in immunology at the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research and UNIL, Mikaël Pittet continued his research at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. In September 2020, he joined the UNIGE Faculty of Medicine as a full professor in the Department of Pathology and Immunology.

His lab, located in the AGORA – Pôle de recherche sur le cancer, focuses on oncoimmunology. Prof. Mikaël Pittet and his team aim to better understand the factors that may increase the effectiveness of cancer treatments.

According to the «Web of Sciences» ranking, Prof. Pittet is among the most cited researchers worldwide. This achievement underlines the excellence and the importance of his scientific research, and serves as a fine recognition of his work.

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*«We scientists are specialists, and although we are talented in our respective fields, it is difficult for us to single-handedly complete a project that is intended to benefit patients. The idea of bringing together experts working in different fields within the AGORA center is brilliant.»*

**You are trying to understand why immunotherapy, which in itself has revolutionized cancer therapies, is not effective in all patients.**

**Can you please explain your research strategy?**

Immunotherapies target cells of the immune system, which are then able to eliminate tumors. And it works! At the present time, immunotherapies are very effective in some patients. However, currently available therapies only target one particular class of immune cells, the so-called T lymphocytes or T cells.

In my lab, we are interested in other immune cell classes, which we might also be able to use as therapeutic targets. We proceed step-by-step: in a first stage, we identify all the different immune cells in a tumor (i.e., not only the T lymphocytes). Next, we try to understand the role these cells play in their environment. For example, do some of these cells encourage or, on the contrary, inhibit tumor growth? And finally, we try to find out how we can manipulate these newly identified cells, in order to develop therapeutic approaches that complement existing treatments.

**You are exploring a yet poorly understood aspect of immune cells.**

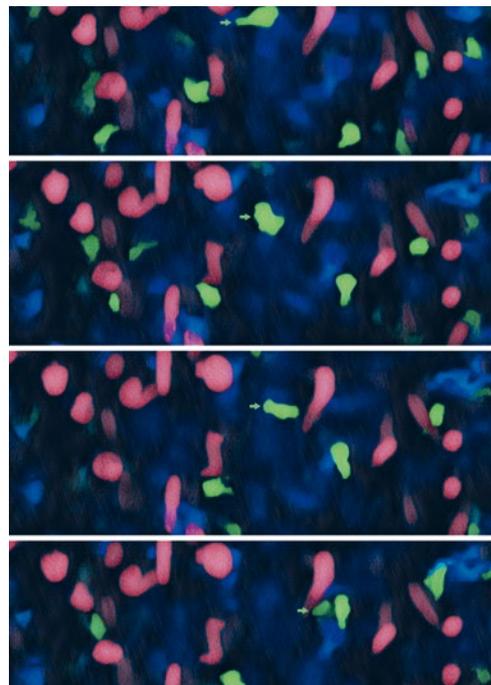
**This is a journey into the unknown!**

**How do you go about investigating this aspect specifically?**

You are right, we are first and foremost explorers. We use tools that allow us to investigate and map the complexity of the immune system. Perhaps one can compare this process to the exploration of the world a few centuries ago. We discover large groups of cells that form «continents». Within these continents, we then notice smaller groups of cells, which represent the «states» or «regions» of the immune world.

One of our important discoveries is that many of these immune cell groups display unique properties. This allows us to specif-

ically target these cells, in order to determine their impact on tumor progression. If we discover a cell group that promotes cancer growth, we try to develop therapeutic strategies that will allow us to decrease the number or the function of these cells. If, on the other hand, we discover a group of cells that display antitumor properties, we look for ways to increase their number or their function.



Green cells : lymphocytes / Blue cells : macrophages  
Pink cells : tumor cells

**Once you have found promising leads, we hope you can translate these into tools and results. The ultimate goal is of course helping patients.**

**What is the expected time frame?**

Obviously, we hope to achieve our goals as quickly as possible. An important question is how to accelerate the translation of fundamental research into the development of treatments that can be applied to patients. The advantage of working in an environment such as the one found in the AGORA building, which is truly a cancer research hub, is that under a single roof we have experts in different disciplines working on complementary aspects to reach this goal.

The path leading to the development of a new treatment is quite long, but we hope to save time thanks to the infrastructure available in our building. I must add that we also collaborate with a large network of people and institutions located throughout the Lake of Geneva area. We are for instance closely linked to hospitals, both in Lausanne (CHUV) and Geneva (HUG).

**With the construction of the AGORA building, the ISREC Foundation aimed to bring together people working in different fields. The COVID-19 pandemic may have slowed down these interactions, but it is good to hear that they are developing as planned. This is a dream come true!**

Yes, I share your enthusiasm! To make rapid progress, it helps to be able to collaborate with experts in different fields. We scientists are specialists, and although we are talented in our respective fields, it is difficult for us to single-handedly complete a project that is intended to benefit patients. The idea of bringing together experts working in different fields within the AGORA center is brilliant. In this way, for example, biologists, clinicians, bioinformaticians and engineers can interact on a regular basis, develop a common language and thus better understand the challenges on hand and seek solutions together. I am convinced that the dynamics hoped for by the ISREC Foundation have come into being.

**Among the many professionals present in the AGORA center are not only scientists dedicated to basic research in labs, but also clinicians who are in close contact with patients. The patient is also at the heart of the ISREC Foundation's mission. For someone like you, who comes from this very applied field, isn't the patient a rather abstract subject?**

Exchanging views and information with clinicians on a daily basis is vital and an important way for us to better understand cancer.

It also allows us to react when a treatment is not as effective as expected, to find out why it isn't working and to search for new and better therapeutic solutions. Today, patients are at the center of our research.

**During the construction of the AGORA center, a common question was whether patients would be present in the building. Would you say, today, that through the clinicians they are present in your research?**

Absolutely, and this influences the way we work. We have many ideas on how the immune system functions, but we need this contact with cancer patients if we want to understand what specifically happens when a tumor evolves, when it responds to treatment or when a new therapy is required. Thanks to these interactions, we can collect key data that allows us to shape our understanding of the immune system and then to design experiments that enable us to test these ideas. The ultimate goal is to be able to return to the patient with new treatments that are even more effective.

**Have you had other opportunities to work in such an environment during your career?**

I have been convinced of the potential of this kind of work environment for quite some time. In the past, I was able to interact with colleagues working in other disciplines. But this is the first time I am part of a real effort to bring together specialists from different fields under one roof. This is amazing.

**One of the main missions of the ISREC Foundation is to support young scientists and academics. As a professor teaching at UNIGE, you are in close contact with the next generation of researchers. Is this important to you? How do you connect with them and motivate them to flourish in these complex domains?**

This contact is essential for me and I find it fascinating. First of all, we have knowledge to



share and we need to encourage these exchanges in order to support young scientists. It is also a good idea to establish connections between these people and to show them the importance of the collaborations they can initiate. We indeed observe that partnerships, frequently interdisciplinary collaborations, often allow us to increase our knowledge of a subject.

Strategically, it is essential to create connections between scientists working in different disciplines, so that they can work together on future solutions. For example, by being exposed to the field of oncology, young bioinformaticians and engineers will be able to involve themselves very rapidly in cancer research and to contribute their expertise.

This interdisciplinary exchange among young scientists also enables each one of them to better understand the language the other one speaks. In this context, I am convinced that all of us should pursue the following two goals: first, we need to be highly knowledgeable in our own field, so as to perform the best possible research. Secondly, we must possess the necessary knowledge to understand interdisciplinary colleagues and to converse with them.



**You recently returned to Switzerland after 17 years in the United States. This must have been a big change for you. Your motivation must have been very strong for you to have taken this major step. What made you want to come back?**

First of all, it was a new adventure, and adventures are always exciting! Beyond that, I have to say that what is happening here is remarkable. The AGORA center is a truly exceptional place, and it is difficult to find an equivalent elsewhere. This facility allows us to perform cutting-edge research in the field of oncology. The evolution of cancer research in the Lake of Geneva area probably

makes this area the best location in Europe in this field. For me, this is a unique opportunity to contribute to this development, and a wonderful time in my career.

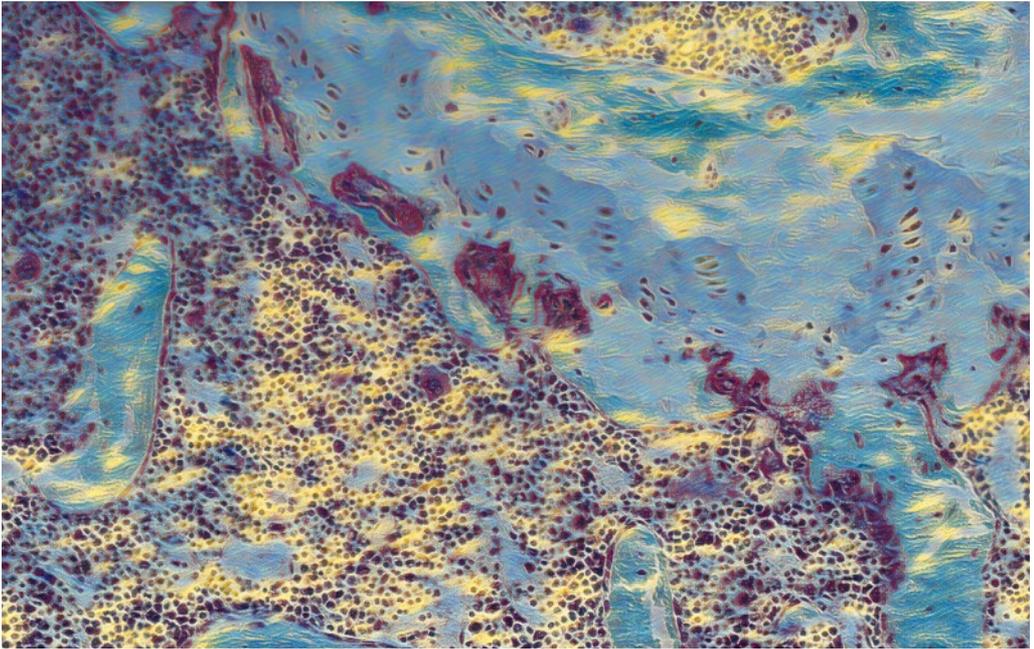
**What does the ISREC Foundation's support mean to you?**

It's very simple: it makes all the difference. Let me start with the financial support we receive: normally, it takes months to apply for funds for a clearly defined project. Here, the funds I receive are linked to a topic, i.e., cancer research. Accordingly, my team is very flexible, as we can adapt or change the course of our research without delay. For example, if tomorrow we realize that we need to answer a new question as quickly as possible, we can get to work immediately. This is a very stimulating situation for us scientists.

In addition, thanks to the infrastructure provided in the AGORA building, we have access to cutting-edge technology. Everything we need is available on site. As a bonus, the fact that we are beneficiaries of the ISREC Foundation's support gives me and my team a sense of pride. The relationship of trust that has developed between the Foundation and us is remarkable. It is our turn to prove that we deserve this trust!

**The ISREC Foundation depends entirely on donations. Is there anything you would like to tell the donors, both small and large, some of whom have been loyal to our cause for many years?**

There is so much to say, but I will start with four words: thank you so much! These generous donors make state-of-the-art research possible, and thanks to their support, local scientists can do a fantastic job. Most donors do not know the researchers who benefit from their generosity, so, being able to observe the situation from the inside, I can tell them that I see incredibly motivated teams of scientists. They work tirelessly, sometimes at night, often on weekends,

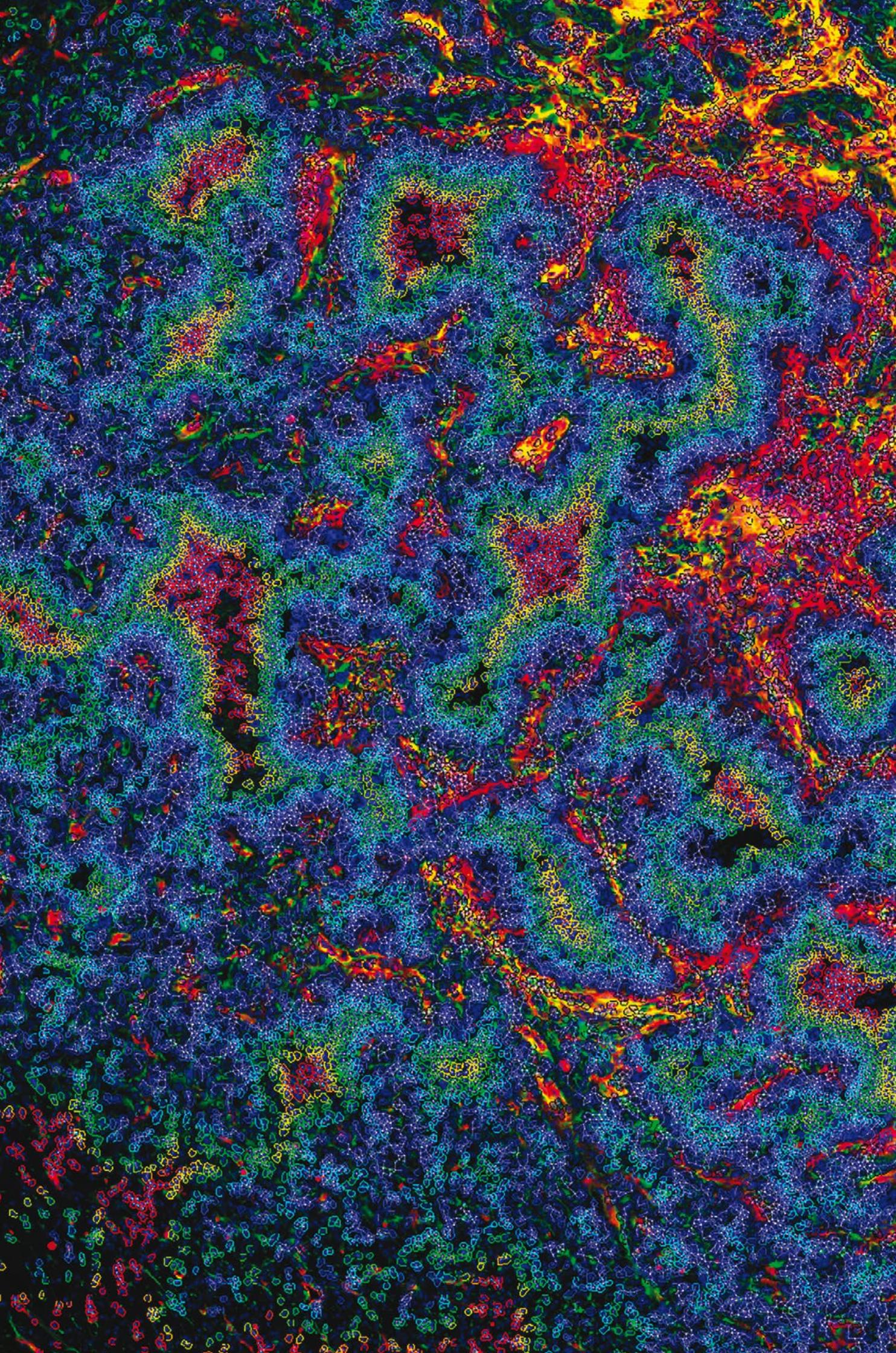


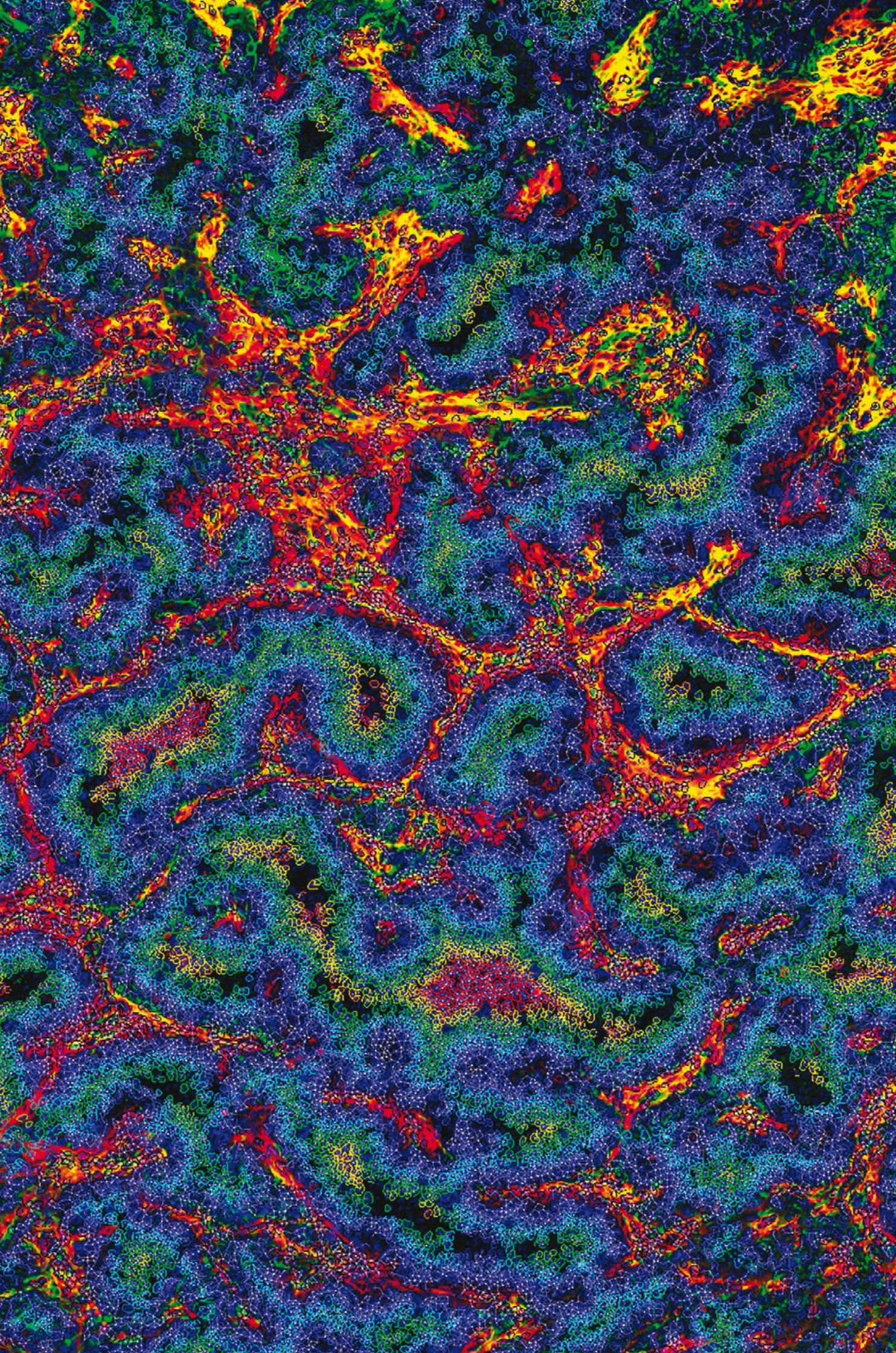
The immune cells develop in the bone marrow. Some of them migrate into the tumor, where they can influence the course of the disease (positively or negatively). / Pages 24 – 25: Palisade, a depiction of the complex brain tumor microenvironment.

with an unflagging desire to increase our knowledge of cancer and to develop new treatment strategies. The generosity of the donors therefore has an impact on many people and benefits scientists who are truly committed to this cause.

I would like to conclude by sharing my optimism. Recently, immunotherapies have revolutionized the way we treat certain types of cancer, yet this is only the very beginning of

an incredible adventure. Based on the data we are generating, we think that new and more effective treatments will soon be available, and that these therapies will help control cancer types that are not yet treatable. This gives us great hope for the patients.





# SUPPORTED PROJECTS

## Young Scientists

The ISREC Foundation supports PhD students working in the fields of biology and medicine. This funding is possible thanks to two types of grants:

- **«Allocated grants»** awarded to top students wishing to enroll in a doctoral program in biology or medicine. They are made possible by donations from physical or moral persons. The Foundation guarantees that the funds are used in full to finance the project to which they have been allocated.
- **«ISREC grants»** or financial support from the ISREC Foundation for a thesis. These grants are awarded to top students wishing to enroll in a doctoral program in biology or medicine. They are financed thanks to donations, legacies and successions.



In 2020, the ISREC Foundation supported the PhD work of five students:

### **DANIELA CROPP**

**Lab of Dr. Grégory Verdeil, Department of Fundamental Oncology, UNIL**

*Study of the Role of NFAT5 in Tumor-Specific T Cells.*

This «ISREC grant», amounting to CHF 80000.– per year, was awarded in April 2019 for 4 years.

### **SILVIA PODAVINI**

**Lab of Prof. Margot Thome Miazza, Biochemistry Department, UNIL**

*Biochemical Identification and Characterization of PD1 Signaling Components.*

This «ISREC grant», amounting to CHF 80000.– per year, was awarded in August 2019 for 4 years.

All scientific summaries are available online:  
[www.isrec.ch/en/the-research](http://www.isrec.ch/en/the-research)

**ANDREA AGNOLETTO**

**Lab of Prof. Cathrin Brisken,  
EPFL/SV/ISREC**

*Androgen Receptor Signaling in the Normal Breast Epithelium and in Estrogen Receptor Alpha-Positive Breast Cancer.*

This «ISREC grant», amounting to CHF 80000.– per year, was awarded in September 2019 for 4 years.

**ARNAUD BAKARIC**

**Lab of Prof. Nicolo Riggi,  
Institute of Pathology, UNIL-CHUV**

*Identification of Molecular Mechanisms Underlying CIC-DUX4 Tumor Pathogenesis and Aggressiveness.*

This MD-PhD «ISREC grant», amounting to CHF 60000.–, was awarded in November 2019 for a period of 1 year.

**SIMGE YÜCEL**

**Labs of Prof. Douglas Hanahan  
and Prof. Michele De Palma,  
EPFL/SV/ISREC**

*Mechanisms and Therapeutic Targeting of the Neuronal NMDAR Signaling Pathway Promoting Breast Cancer Pathogenesis.*

This «ISREC grant», amounting to CHF 80000.– per year, was awarded in November 2020 for 4 years.

# SUPPORTED PROJECTS

## Translational Research

Translational research projects encourage collaborations between basic and clinical research. Their goal is to study cells and their interactions with the environment, and to provide impulses for novel therapies and clinical approaches designed to act on the causes of cellular malfunction. Financial support for translational cancer research projects is possible thanks to two different types of subsidies:

- **«ISREC Chairs»**  
The purpose of these professorships is to offer young professors affiliated to the EPFL or to a Swiss university (faculty of biology or medicine) the opportunity to launch their research careers. They are financed through the fortune of the Foundation.
- **«Allocated Funds»**  
These funds from private donations are specifically created for each project and may solely be used for their predetermined purpose. The Foundation guarantees that the donations are used in full to finance the project to which they have been assigned.



In 2020, the following chairs were financed by the ISREC Foundation:

### **Decoding the Genetics of Lymphoma for the Development of New Therapies**

This translational oncology chair, endowed with CHF 500 000.– per year, was awarded in November 2014 for a period of 6 years to the research group of Prof. Elisa Oricchio (EPFL/SV/ISREC).

### **Molecular Cancer Immunotherapy and Immune Engineering**

This translational oncology chair, endowed with CHF 500 000.– per year, was awarded in June 2015 for a period of 6 years to the research group of «tenure track» Prof. Ping-Chih Ho (UNIL/LUDWIG).

### **Cancer Immunity in Context**

This immuno-oncology chair, endowed with CHF 1 000 000.– per year, was awarded



in July 2019 for a period of 10 years to the research group of Prof. Mikaël Pittet (UNIGE/AGORA).

#### **Brain Tumor Immunology Program**

This immuno-oncology chair, endowed with CHF 400 000.– per year, was awarded in December 2019 for a period of 6 years to the research group of Prof. Denis Migliorini (Laboratoire d'immunologie des tumeurs/ UNIGE/AGORA).

#### **Projects supported in 2020:**

##### **A Phase I Clinical Trial Assessing Prophylactic Infusion of Donor CD45RA-Negative Memory/Effector T Cells into Patients Transplanted with Hematopoietic Stem Cells from Haploidentical Donors After Reduced Intensity Conditioning**

This « allocated fund » provided by the Symphysis charitable umbrella foundation, amounting to CHF 77 000.–, was awarded to Dr. Anne-Claire Mamez (HUG) in April 2018 for 4 years.

##### **A Model of Care Based on Electronic Patient-Reported Outcomes for the Early Detection and Management of Immune-Related Adverse Events in Patients Under Immunotherapy:**

##### **A Multicentric Phase II Randomized Controlled Trial (lePRO)**

This « allocated fund » for nursing research, derived from a private donation and amounting to CHF 1 000 000.–, was awarded to Prof. Olivier Michielin and Prof. Manuela Eicher (CHUV) in November 2018 for 3 years.

##### **Deciphering Tumorigenesis Driven by Replication-Associated DNA Damage**

This « allocated fund » in genetics and genomics, amounting to CHF 280 000.–, was awarded in January 2019 to Prof. Massimo Lopes (University of Zurich) and Prof. Achim Weber (University Hospital Zurich) for 2 years.

##### **Investigating the Functional Role of Cellular Phenotypes in Melanoma Targeted Therapy**

This « allocated fund » in oncogenic signaling, amounting to CHF 280 000.–, was granted in January 2019 to Prof. Reinhard Dummer (Department of Dermatology, University Hospital Zurich) and Prof. Lukas Sommer (Institute of Anatomy, University of Zurich) for 2 years.

##### **Immunotherapy for Relapsed-Refractory Pediatric and Young Adult**



#### **B-Cell Precursor Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia: CAR-T Cell Clinical Trial Development**

This «allocated fund» in pediatric oncology, amounting to CHF 856 740.–, was awarded to Dr. Francesco Ceppi (CHUV) in September 2019 for 3 years.

#### **Clinical Translation of FLASH Radiotherapy**

This «allocated fund», derived from a donation of the Biltema Foundation and amounting to CHF 1 150 000.–, was awarded to Prof. Jean Bourhis (CHUV) in June 2020 for 2.5 years.

#### **Development of a Framework and Toolkit for Patient and Public Involvement in Cancer Research Focusing on Patient-Reported Outcome/Experience Measures**

This «allocated fund» in nursing research, amounting to CHF 76 400.–, was awarded to Prof. Manuela Eicher (Institute of Higher Education and Research in Healthcare – IUFERS) in July 2020 for 1 year.

#### **Development of a Novel B Cell-Based Vaccine for Metastatic Solid Cancers**

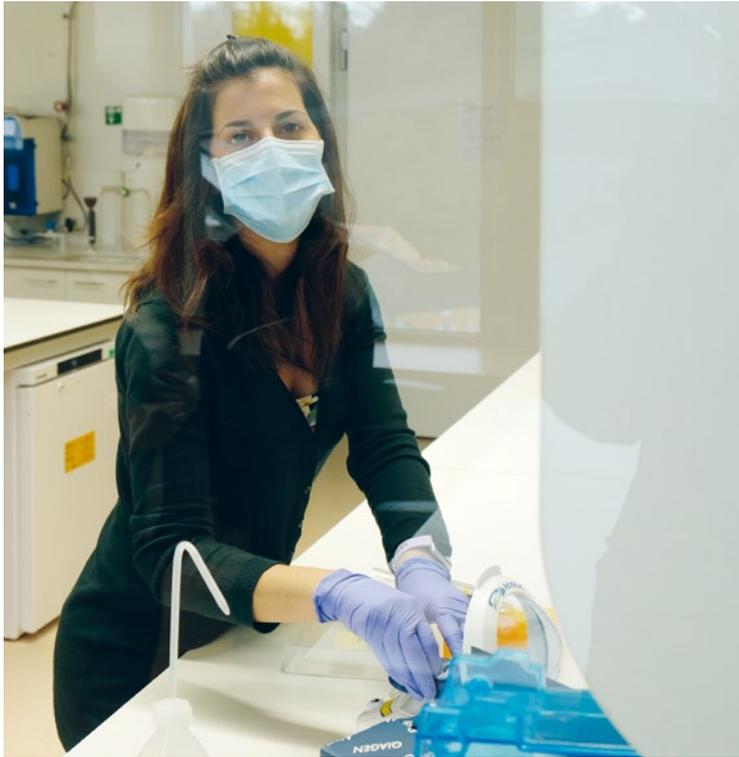
This «allocated fund» for immunotherapies, amounting to CHF 395 000.–, was awarded to Prof. Lana Kandalaft (Oncology Department, UNIL/CHUV) in September 2020 for 3 years.

#### **Distress Management**

This «allocated fund» in nursing research, amounting to CHF 15 000.–, was awarded to Prof. Manuela Eicher (Institute of Higher Education and Research in Healthcare – IUFERS) in October 2020 for 1 year.

#### **Targeting Tumor-Infiltrating Myeloid Cells for Prostate Cancer Therapy**

This «allocated fund» in clinical research, amounting to CHF 300 000.–, was awarded to Prof. Andrea Alimonti (Institute of Oncology Research) in October 2020 for 2 years.



### **Transcriptomic and Phenotypic Profiling of the White Blood Cells in Breast Cancer**

This «allocated fund», amounting to CHF 314 520.–, was awarded to Prof. Curzio Rüegg (University of Fribourg) in October 2020 for 2 years.

### **BET – Bio-Engineering and Technology**

This «allocated fund», amounting to CHF 800 000.–, was awarded in October 2020 for the establishment of the BET lab at the heart of the AGORA – Pôle de recherche sur le cancer.

### **SAKK 16/18: Immune-Modulatory Radiotherapy to Enhance the Effects of Neo-Adjuvant PD-L1 Blockade after Neo-Adjuvant Chemotherapy in Patients with Resectable Stage III (N2) Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC). A Multicenter Phase II Trial**

This «allocated fund» in clinical research, amounting to CHF 310 000.–, was awarded to Dr. Sacha Rothschild (University Hospital Basel) in December 2020 for 3 years.

### **Methylation Profiling in Rhabdomyosarcoma**

This «allocated fund» in pediatric cancer research, amounting to CHF 120 000.–, was awarded to Dr. Eva Brack (Pediatric Oncology Department, Inselspital, Bern) in December 2020 for 2 years.

*All scientific summaries are available online:*  
[www.isrec.ch/en/the-research](http://www.isrec.ch/en/the-research)



From left to right: Philippe Eckert, Claudine Amstein, Thomas W. Paulsen, Pierre-Marie Glauser, Didier Trono, Philippe Moreillon, Franco Cavalli et Béatrice Schaad. Absents : Yves Bonzon, Bertrand Levrat and Andreas Tobler

## The Foundation comprises the following bodies :

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The Foundation Council is the highest managing authority of the Foundation. It allocates resources, appoints its own members, those of the Scientific Board and the Management, as well as the Financial Auditors. It approves the annual budget and the Foundation's accounts.

**President** (until January 31, 2021)

**Catherine Labouchère**

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**President** (as of February 1, 2021)

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The Scientific Board is composed of experts of international renown in various fields of cancer research, who cannot be a member of the Foundation Council, with the exception of the president of the Scientific Board, by virtue of his position. Assisted by the Scientific Board, the Management selects the research projects to be funded, and presents its recommendations to the Foundation Council.

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Assisted by the Scientific Board, the Management selects the research projects to be funded. It develops and recommends a fundraising strategy and carries out the tasks defined by the Foundation Council.

**Prof. Susan M. Gasser, Director**

**Aylin Niederberger, Administrative and Financial Director**

## THE FINANCIAL AUDITORS

The financial auditors, whose tasks are determined by law, are nominated by the Foundation Council. They are elected for one year. The 2020 mandate was entrusted to **Ernst & Young SA** in Lausanne, a fiduciary company recognized by the Swiss Institute of Certified Accountants and Tax Consultants.

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P. 4 Olivier Evard / Pp. 19 and 23 Pittet lab, 2021  
Pp. 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13 (up), 18, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30,  
31, 32 and 33 Philippe Pache  
Pp. 24 and 25 Spencer Watson, Joyce lab, 2020

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