

Luxembourg, Friday 25th November 2011,

## **“ON THE RIGHT TRACK”**

### **International scientists review the Personalised Medicine Consortium in Luxembourg.**

*The Luxembourg Personalised Medicine Consortium (PMC) has been operating for just over a year now, and the scientists involved asked their international peers for a critical review of their plans. The results of a two-day retreat: They have made a very good start on their programs, meaning PMC has an appropriate strategic setup. Now they need to refine some aspects of their programs and intensify and expand their networking outside Luxembourg. “It’s great to know our first steps were in the right direction,” Dr. Bob Phillips, head of the Integrated Biobank of Luxembourg (IBBL) says. “Having made rational strategic decisions, the goal of the PMC is now to make our research programs attractive to potential international research partners.”*

Three Luxembourg-based research institutes collaborate to form the PMC. Alongside IBBL are CRP Santé and LCSB (Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine). Their objective is to conduct research in joint projects on how diagnoses and treatments can be tailored to the needs of individual patients. To do so, they first have to understand the pathomechanisms involved at a molecular level. This will require enormous research effort, along with optimal deployment of research funding and intellectual resources. “Success through collaboration” is PMC’s motto.

IBBL and LCSB are both very young research organisations, whose launch was closely associated with the founding of PMC. Bob Phillips explains: “When I began to build up IBBL, my first question was: What tissue should we collect for research and store at IBBL in order to attain the greatest possible scientific and medical benefit?” The Luxembourg bio-scientists had to find the answers as a team since as Phillips explains, “our bio-bank can provide both tissues and research services, but we need to know what samples and data the bio-scientists need for their projects.”

Prof. Rudi Balling, head of LCSB, faced similar challenges for coordinating his research. LCSB’s focus is on Parkinson’s disease, a highly complex neurodegenerative disease. Researchers have found many signs that the onset of Parkinson’s disease depends on genetic and environmental factors and is closely associated with other diseases. The team at LCSB therefore works closely with medical professionals at CRP Santé, for example, and has a strong interest in a scientific tissue bank such as the one at IBBL. “With PMC, we built up the right contacts and collaborations in Luxembourg to

continue in this direction,” Balling says, summing up the external colleagues’ verdict at the closed meeting.

With the PMC in pole position to expand its existing international networks, Phillips looks to do just that: “This is essential in a small country such as Luxembourg – especially when it comes to personalised medicine.” Such a discipline requires data from a large number of cases if one is to make meaningful statements on the triggers of diseases and possible therapies. Balling adds: “All those involved in PMC have excellent international contacts who we will systematically bring into the project.” This will ensure the Luxembourg train of biomedical research will stay on track towards a successful future.

## ABOUT THE PERSONALIZED MEDICINE CONSORTIUM

The Personalized Medicine Consortium (PMC) is the umbrella organization, which links the key organizations involved in translational medical research, including the three leaders of the Luxembourg Health Sciences and Technologies Action Plan: the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine (LCSB), the IBBL and the Lung Cancer Programme (and the Programme in Personalized Medicine - PPM, within CRP-Santé).

The role of the PMC is to create programmes in research and evaluation that make Luxembourg a world-leader in the adoption of new advances in personalized medicine into the healthcare system in Luxembourg. The PMC coordinates the activities, builds synergy and avoids duplication of efforts and resources.

The PMC initially focuses on three disease areas where Luxembourg is able to create excellent research programs that will advance science and have the potential to impact morbidity and mortality associated with the diseases: cancer (lung, colon and breast), Type 2 diabetes and Parkinson’s disease. In addition, the PMC will create a normal population cohort to serve as controls for studies and to provide important data on the demographics of disease in Luxembourg.

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