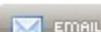


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IBBL Joins Forces With Europe's Biggest Players In Cancer Research

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The Luxembourg-based biobank will contribute its expertise to a new European consortium with the goal of validating the use of blood-based biomarkers for cancer. The ambitious project is a public-private partnership and was selected for funding by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), a collaboration between the European Union and the European pharmaceutical industry. IBBL (Integrated BioBank of Luxembourg) joins the ranks of 33 partners from prestigious academic and clinical research institutions, Small-to-Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and the pharmaceutical industry. Blood-based biomarkers such as circulating tumour cells (CTCs), circulating free tumour DNA (cfDNA) and microRNAs (miRNAs) are potential indicators for the tumour burden of patients living with cancer. The use of these markers from blood may offer an additional invaluable tool for modern cancer therapy: apart from being of high importance when biopsies of the tumour are not accessible, blood-based tests may allow a close follow-up of disease markers offering a means to monitor the efficacy of treatment and potentially improve the choice of treatment options.

CANCER-ID is a newly formed European consortium funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) with currently 33 partners from 13 countries aiming at the establishment of standard protocols for and clinical validation of blood-based biomarkers. It brings together experts from academic and clinical research, innovative Small-to-Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), diagnostics companies and the pharmaceutical industry thus providing a unique setting for establishing clinical utility of "liquid biopsies". The contributions to the project of currently 8.2 million EUR by the industrial partners are complemented by funding from the IMI Joint Undertaking resulting in a total budget of EUR 14.5 million. The consortium is coordinated by the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, the University of Twente, Bayer HealthCare and Menarini.

As Dr Catherine Larue, CEO of IBBL, explains, the IMI programme is highly competitive on two levels: "First you have to become part of a mounting consortium, preferably with internationally recognised partners. Then the project that the consortium submits has to go through a rigorous review process before being accepted for funding". Despite the competition, IBBL has been pursuing the strategy of attaining European funding for a number of years now, because of the big potential rewards. "Being part of an important European consortium is great news for IBBL and for Luxembourg, not just in terms of securing funding from the European Commission, but also in terms of visibility for our research sector and personalised medicine. IBBL is being increasingly recognized as a first-class research support infrastructure in Europe and this consortium clearly shows that we can run with the big dogs", says Dr Larue.

Within the consortium, IBBL will contribute to a number of activities, including the validation of laboratory methods, the development of standard operating procedures and the development of a proficiency testing programme. Indeed, one key factor in the success of any large consortium is the complementary expertise of the partners. "CANCER-ID is an excellent example of a project in which a public-private partnerships enables a collaborative research approach to come up with novel concepts in modern cancer therapy", states Dr Thomas Schlange from Global Biomarker Research at Bayer HealthCare Global Drug Discovery. "The consortium brings together a large experienced team of biomarker experts from all over Europe that extends far beyond the scope of traditional 'one-on-one' industry-academia collaborations."

For more information on CANCER-ID visit: <http://www.cancer-id.eu>

About the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI)