

Translational Research Unit Visit at Innsbruck Medical University and Center for Personalized Medicine “Oncotyrol”:

Topic: Translational Research and Development of Novel Biomarkers and Drugs: the laboratory-clinical interface

Innsbruck, AUSTRIA

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In May 2013 Innsbruck Medical University and Center for Personalized Medicine “Oncotyrol” welcomed nine young medical oncologists from Italy, Spain, Peru, Israel, India, Belarus and Greece. ESMO TRU Visit was supervised by Professors Ira-Ida Skvortsova (Dept. of Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology), Wolfgang Hilbe (Dept. of Internal Medicine) and Lukas A. Huber (Scientific Director of “Oncotyrol” and Head of the Division of Cell Biology, Biocenter, Innsbruck Medical University). The goal of the three-day program of this ESMO TRU Visit was to highlight the latest advances in the development of predictive biomarkers and novel therapeutic targets that could significantly improve therapy outcome in patients with malignant tumours.



During the first day participants were familiarised with translational research in Oncology that is conducted by various departments and divisions at Innsbruck Medical University. Also the representative of the Tyrolean Cancer Research Institute (Karin Jöhrer-Deym) demonstrated clinically relevant projects which are collaborative with oncologists at





Innsbruck Medical University. Additionally, heads of the laboratories for translational cancer research (Dept. of Otorhinolaryngology, Dept. of Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology, Dept. of Urology) presented their research interests and ideas. Fellows had an opportunity to know more about very new and recently initiated work on the development of novel targeted radiotherapy using radiolabelled peptides (Elisabeth von Guggenberg, Dept. of Nuclear Medicine).

The second day of the program focused on the research activities of Oncotyrol and its cancer projects. Various types of facilities in the laboratories belonging to Oncotyrol and Biocenter were demonstrated to fellows.



The third day of the program was planned in order to give information about the special PhD Programme "Clinical Cancer Research" at Innsbruck Medical University (Director Wolfgang Hilbe). Fellows have seen how young Austrian medical oncologists could conduct their translational research projects.

In addition, ESMO TRU Visit participants and colleagues from Innsbruck Medical University had an opportunity to know more about cancer treatment and research in countries of fellows. It is also pleased to mention that our scientific discussions during the sessions allowed planning the research collaborations between institutions.

All fellows and supervisors of this TRU Visit wish to thank ESMO for financial support of this meeting and providing a chance to meet together and discuss translational cancer research. All supervisors and lecturers are very thankful for the great interest revealed by fellows to our research programs and projects.

Testimonials:

Dimitrios Matthaios, Greece:

"It was an honour to visit Innsbruck Medical University and Center for Personalized Medicine "Oncotyrol" during the translational research visit that I have been granted from ESMO. I had the opportunity to interact with the faculty members of a center with an outstanding multidisciplinary oncology approach and high research productivity. I would like to thank all the members of Oncotyrol that have given their best efforts for the success of this event. Special thanks I would like to address to Professor Skvortsova who was always willing to solve our questions and her feedback was valuable and of course to Professor Hilbe and to Professor Huber for their hospitality".

Surendra Chaudhary, India:

"It's my pleasure and honour to be a participant of the ESMO TRUV 2013. During these wonderful three days at Innsbruck Medical University I got an opportunity to imbibe highest quality of knowledge and experience through our very kind and friendly fellowship supervisors Prof. Ira-Ida Skvortsova, Prof. Wolfgang Hilbe, Prof. Lukas A. Huber. All three days were full of thought provoking sessions, knowledge and excitement shared by the Faculty, students and "Oncotyrol" projects. We got an opportunity to interact very closely with all participants and shared our knowledge and experience to each other in a highly friendly environment. Beside the deep insights, lectures and research presentations on Biomarker and Drug Development we also got an opportunity to visit the

Innsbruck Medical University facilities and Laboratory which was highly exciting and rewarding experience to all of us. I am sure all this knowledge and experience gained during the ESMO Translation Visit will help us in the strong foundation and future collaboration in the field of basic oncology research setting”.

Rosa Maria Rodriguez, Spain:

“The fellowship has given us the opportunity to know more about how to make high quality translational oncology research. Another benefit was sharing different points of view with the other participants and the basic researchers. I strongly recommend applying for the fellowship to other young oncologists. It has been a short and intense experience about translational research. Moreover we got the opportunity to meet oncologists from different health systems and know how they work”.

Monica Malik, India:

"The TRU visit at Innsbruck provided us the unique opportunity to witness how the strong integration of academia, clinicians and industry can help to channelize efforts towards accelerating the development and dissemination of novel strategies and tools for prevention, diagnosis, prognostication and therapy. We gained useful insights into the current translational research in oncology and its future potential. The course comprehensively covered various areas of translational research including a session on health technology assessment and cost consciousness. The knowledge gained at the visit will definitely help us strengthen the translational research program in our institute and country."

Vivek S Radhakrishnan, India:

“It introduced me to the exciting scientific interface between basic research and real world health care.
A. The idea of taking a clinical problem and attempting to find solutions to it by getting to the very basics of cellular mechanisms and action seems to be one of the most logical ways of addressing issues in Oncology which a conventional therapeutic approach has not provided an answer.
B. “Oncotyrol” is one of the leading translational research facilities in Europe. This was an excellent opportunity to visit such a centre and see how translational research works from a close distance.
C. The concepts of Bio-markers, Cancer Stem Cells, Health-Technology assessment, Molecular Imaging and Targeted radiotherapy, Translational research in Radiotherapy, Efficient Drug screening by newer culture based methods, etc. were explained.
D. Bio-banking and its long term benefits were understood.
E. Running a translational lab and making it economically viable by way of intellectual property rights and patents was also explained”.

Hanna Anishchanka, Belarus:

“I loved this visit very much. First, Innsbruck is a beautiful city. As for the Biocenter and laboratories at Innsbruck Medical University, I liked their multi-functionality and direct relationship with clinicians. Additionally, we were familiarized with the clinical departments that are involved in the treatment of cancer patients. When the Department of Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology was visited, we recognized that the Head of the department (Prof. Peter Lukas) and his colleagues think also about the psychological status of cancer patients: not only the highest quality of anti-cancer treatment is being provided, but also an every-day psychological care is proposed (the special painting room is organized in the department). In addition, it was a great opportunity to improve the skills in the scientific and spoken English. All participants are very professional, very competent and interesting persons, so I hope we will collaborate and communicate also in future. I only regret one issue that the visit lasted only 3 days”.

Idan Ben-Horin, Israel:

"The TRU visit organised by the Innsbruck Medical University and Oncotyrol was a great educational experience. The different research projects stimulated discussions between the faculty and the attendees and there was a lively exchange of ideas. Moreover, experiencing first hand the level of dedication to research and to its implications and applications at the clinical level was inspirational. The added bonus of being able to share ideas and learn from the experience of other young oncologists is also not to be overlooked.

I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank Prof. Skvortsova for organising this meeting, her efforts to make this meeting a success, both professionally and socially, were not missed by any of the participants and her encouragement to us to participate and ask questions made the visit a truly remarkable experience."

