

Healthcare industry BW

Michael Baumann – the new man at the helm of the DKFZ

On 1st November 2016, Professor Michael Baumann, a radiation oncologist from Dresden, became the new chairman and scientific director of the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg. Michael Baumann has the perfect background when it comes to combining basic and applied cancer research. This enables scientific findings to be used more quickly and effectively for preventing, diagnosing and treating cancer, and patients' individual needs to be taken into account.



Prof. Dr. Michael Baumann
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With the election of Michael Baumann as chairman and scientific director of the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), a post vacated by Prof. Dr. Otmar Wiestler two years ago when he left to

become president of the Helmholtz Association has finally been filled. During this two-year period, Prof. Dr. Michael Boutros has been acting as interim chairman and scientific director at the DKFZ.¹ Michael Baumann was unanimously elected by the DKFZ Board of Trustees in an appointment that has raised high expectations in Heidelberg and beyond.

“In Michael Baumann we have gained an outstanding physician and scientist,” says Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka, the German Federal Minister of Education and Research. “He is the ideal person for combining basic research with applied cancer research. It is only through this approach that scientific findings can be made available more quickly and effectively to patients.” Prof. Dr. Josef Puchta, administrative director of the German Cancer Research Center, comments: “I have known Michael Baumann for five years and have worked closely with him at the German Cancer Consortium (DKTK). He will contribute a great deal of know-how to the organisation and take a very dynamic approach. I am convinced that together we will continue to successfully shape the future development of the German Cancer Research Center.”

Career path of a radiation oncologist and radiotherapist

Michael Baumann, who became head of the DKFZ on 1st November 2016, has made a name for himself internationally in the fields of clinical radiobiology and experimental radiotherapy of tumours. He has played a decisive role in connecting new radiation biology findings with radiation therapy technology for more efficient clinical treatment of cancer with radiation. Individualised radiotherapy involving radiation-specific biomarkers that can be used to adapt cancer therapy to individual patients, is the main focus of his research activities. This involves investigating chromosomal regions (DNA repair foci) that are active in the DNA repair system for their applicability as predictive markers for tumour radiosensitivity. Baumann's other areas of work include developing bioimaging techniques in the field of radiation oncology, high-precision and proton therapy, and the treatment of lung, head and throat tumours.

After studying medicine and obtaining a doctorate at the University of Hamburg, Baumann went to the Harvard Medical School in the USA to carry out research on radiation oncology. He trained as a radiation therapist and established an experimental radiation therapy research group at the Hamburg-Eppendorf University Hospital, where he did his habilitation. He then became head of the Department of Experimental Radiology and Radiation Biology at the Dresden University of Technology. In 2004, he was promoted to professor (C4) of radiation oncology. Baumann is the founding director of the University Cancer Centre at Dresden University of Technology, where all medical disciplines work together on the diagnosis and therapy of all tumour types using state-of-the-art technical equipment. He was also instrumental in establishing the OncoRay® - Centre for Radiation Research in Oncology - research platform. OncoRay® is an association of institutes of the Helmholtz Centre in Dresden-Rossendorf, Dresden University Hospital and the Medical Faculty of Dresden University of Technology, and was set up to improve cancer treatment by way of biologically individualised, technologically optimised radiotherapy.

The Heidelberg-Dresden alliance

Together with Otmar Wiestler, the then chairman and scientific director of the DKFZ, Michael Baumann was behind the establishment of the "National Center for Radiation Research in Oncology Dresden/Heidelberg" in 2010. The center is a joint venture between OncoRay® and HIRO, the Heidelberg Institute of Radiation Oncology. HIRO brings together radiotherapy research at the DKFZ, Heidelberg University Hospital, the National Center for Tumour Diseases (NCT) and the Heidelberg Ion-Beam Therapy Center (HIT).² Cooperation in cancer research, especially radiation research in oncology, between Heidelberg and Dresden, is reinforced by the DKTK (Baumann was coordinator of



Prof. Dr. Michael Baumann and German Minister of Education and Research, Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka, at the official opening of the Proton Therapy Unit at the Carl Gustav Carus University Hospital in Dresden.

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the Dresden site), as well as the establishment of the National Center for Tumour Diseases (NCT) in Dresden in 2015. Baumann was founding director of the NCT branch in Dresden, which is the only other city besides Heidelberg with an NCT. When the new NCT management board was appointed in Dresden, Baumann commented: "As new chairman of the DKFZ, I am delighted to carry on working with my colleagues in Dresden to ensure the continued development of the NCT in Dresden as an excellent location for personalised oncology."

There are 250 known types of cancer, and the same cancer can develop differently in different people. Personalised treatment approaches are therefore indispensable. Individual differences are increasingly being shown to result from cancer biology. With the help of Germany's largest sequencing unit, which was jointly established by DKFZ and DKTK, the genomes of patients can be analysed quickly and accurately, and the data used for diagnostic methods and therapies.

One of Baumann's central concerns is the further development of translational oncology, i.e. the transfer of basic research results into new approaches for preventing, diagnosing and treating cancer, and testing these approaches in clinical trials so that they can be used quickly, safely and in a scientifically founded manner for the benefit of patients. The DKFZ works with leading clinical institutions in the field of cancer research, thus creating the necessary structural conditions to focus on "being one step ahead of cancer", as Baumann puts it. Baumann will continue supporting such interdisciplinary partnerships – not least with Dresden. As soon as his new responsibilities allow, the new scientific director of the DKFZ also intends to establish his own research group of radiation oncologists, biologists and physicists.

References:

1 <https://www.gesundheitsindustrie-bw.de/en/article/news/michael-boutros-from-the-study-of-social-gene-networks-to-the-management-of-the-dkfz/>

2 <https://www.gesundheitsindustrie-bw.de/de/fachbeitrag/pm/national-center-for-radiation-research-in-oncology-dresden-heidelberg-gegruendet/>



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Article

27-Feb-2017

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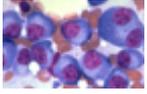
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