

SAKK / Celgene «Life Grant» 2017

The second «Life Grant» was awarded at the SAKK semi-annual meeting on 29 June 2017. The Grant supports a research project in the field of pancreatic cancer and is sponsored by the SAKK (Swiss Association for Clinical Cancer Research) and Celgene GmbH.



Left to right: Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos (SAKK), PD Dr. med. Dr. rer. medic. Martin Maurer (Winner), Dr. Erich Weber (Celgene GmbH)

Pancreatic cancer remains a devastating disease with a poor survival prognosis and a significant impairment to the quality of life of patients and their relatives. «The SAKK and Celgene are united in their interest in innovative research for life-changing medicines and treatment concepts for patients with a high medical need. The «Life Grant» research award supports planned or ongoing research projects for the treatment of pancreatic cancer which are aimed at improving the quality of life of patients and their relatives», explains Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos, Chairman and SAKK President.

Together with Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos, an independent jury evaluated all submitted projects and judged the project by PD Dr. med. Dr. rer. medic.

Martin Maurer and PD Dr. med. Mathias Worni, as winner. «There is still much to do, particularly in the area of treatment concepts in pancreatic cancer. This is where imaging plays a major role in the better selection of patients. In this context, the project is very exciting and we hope to gain a direct patient benefit for the future», confirms Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos.

Explanation of the research project «The value of diffusion-weighted magnetic resonance tomography in the evaluation of the response to neo-adjuvant treatment of patients with borderline resectable or locally advanced cancer of the pancreas» by PD Dr. med. Dr. rer. medic. Martin Maurer:

«In our project we would like to investigate the value of a specific mag-

netic resonance tomography (MRI) imaging technique, the so-called diffusion-weighted MRI, with regard to its value for assessing the treatment response to chemotherapy and, if applicable, additional radiation therapy, in patients suffering from the most common form of pancreatic cancer. Ultimately, surgical excision with tumour-free margins on the margin of the surgical site is the only prospect for a permanent cure of the disease. Here it is extremely important to assess in advance whether therapy has been effective, based on imaging, and whether subsequent surgery with tumour-free margins can prove to be successful. The present standard imaging method for pancreatic cancer is computer tomography (CT). The CT is a method which can reproduce tumours very accurately and display them as 3D models, as well as permitting information on the possible involvement of important adjacent vessels and with regard to changes in size during the course due to treatment. However, all these aspects can be assessed equally well via MRI. Add to this, that diffusion MRI has meanwhile been integrated as additional measuring method in the standard investigation protocols of MRI examinations at most hospitals. This is based on the measurement of intrinsic movement (diffusion) of water in human tissue. For example, tumour tissue consists of densely packed cells, thus limiting their diffusion, and is generally speaking lower than in the adjacent regular tissue. This allows the indirect measurement of tissue cellularity with the aid of diffusion MRI. We can also utilise this in patients with pancreatic cancer as we can directly measure how the tumour has responded to previous chemotherapy. Approximately one third of patients are borderline cases, where there is considerable latitude of judgement as to whether surgery with ultimately tumour-free margins can be successful. We believe that we can deliver better

predictions with the aid of extensive MRI imaging including diffusion MRI. Ultimately, the aim is to provide surgery for the highest number of patients who have a genuine chance of being cured, but also to accurately pinpoint those patients without this chance and where surgery would in the end be unnecessary. A further benefit of diffusion MRI is to have very solid information as to whether tumour metastases exist, for example in the liver, and with considerably greater validity than is possible with the standard method of CT imaging.»

The «Life Grant» is widely accepted, and participation appeals to numerous disciplines. The submitted re-

search projects included disciplines such as surgery, medical oncology, radiotherapy, diagnostics/monitoring for therapeutic management, medical epidemiology and complementary medicine. The Life Grant 2016 was awarded to PD Dr. med. Mathias Worni from the Insel Hospital for the study with the title «Impact of irreversible electroporation on quality of life for patients with locally advanced pancreatic cancer». «Unfortunately, only few patients have so far been enrolled in the study at the present point in time. However, we are optimistic that patient recruitment will increase rapidly from now on», confirms Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos.

Life²⁰¹⁷

SAKK/CELGENE Grant
FOR RESEARCH ON PANCREATIC CANCER CARE

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The «Life Grant» is sponsored by:



About SAKK

The Swiss Association for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) is a non-profit organisation which has been conducting clinical trials in oncology since 1965. Its most important objective is research into new cancer therapies, advancing existing treatments and improving the chances of recovery of patients suffering from cancer. This is achieved by cooperation within Switzerland and in collaboration with centres and study groups abroad. The SAKK is supported by a performance agreement with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI) as well as by partners such as the Swiss Cancer League and Swiss Cancer Research. More information available at: www.sakk.ch