

## PRESS RELEASE

Date Bern, December 12, 2019

Contact Flurina Hoffmann, Head of Fundraising & Communication, phone +41 31 508 41 78;  
email: [flurina.hoffmann@sakk.ch](mailto:flurina.hoffmann@sakk.ch)

### Establishing a SAKK Working Group for Cellular Therapies

**The use of T cell therapies in cancer treatment is advancing rapidly, creating promising, personalized treatment options for cancer patients. Relevant products are beginning to appear on the market, and major efforts are being made to further investigate the potential of this novel kind of immunotherapy in treating various kinds of hematological and solid tumors. The USA and China currently dominate the field; it is therefore of the outmost importance that the Swiss research institutes work together closely towards establishing themselves as an important international competitor in T cell therapy.**

In 2019, Swiss Cancer Research Foundation (*Stiftung Krebsforschung Schweiz, KFS*) held two workshops developing a national platform for cellular therapies. This led to the conclusion that nation-wide coordination is essential in the areas of research, manufacturing, exchange with regulatory authorities, identifying financial mechanisms for supporting the development of new T cell therapy technologies and monitoring of their results.

It was agreed that the **Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK)** is ideally suited to coordinate these activities. Consequently, during the SAKK semi-annual meeting in November 2019, a Working Group for Cellular Therapies was created. Prof. **George Coukos**, MD, PhD, Lausanne University Hospital (*Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, CHUV, University of Lausanne and Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research*) was elected president of the new Working Group. In addition, three Vice Presidents were appointed to support the President, namely PD Dr. med. Antonia Müller, University Hospital Zurich (*UniversitätsSpital Zürich, USZ*), PD Dr. med. Heinz Läubli, MD PhD University Hospital Basel (*Universitätsspital Basel, USB*) and Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Sacha Zeerleder, University Hospital Berne (*Inselspital Bern*).

The Working Group for Cellular Therapies focuses on academic research, on innovative cellular therapies and on collaborative research with pharmaceutical companies and not on initiatives aiming

to compete with marketed products. Our ultimate goal is to rapidly advance cell-based technologies, in order to improve cancer care for all our patients.

We wish Prof. George Coukos and the researchers involved in this working group much success in setting up this network for cellular therapies. We are convinced that the creation of this national platform will be of great benefit to cancer patients in Switzerland.

For questions:

- Prof. Dr. med. George Coukos, Head of Oncology department UNIL CHUV and President SAKK Working Group Cellular Therapies; phone +41 21 314 06 24; email: [george.coukos@chuv.ch](mailto:george.coukos@chuv.ch)
- Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos, Chief Physician Oncology/Hematology Cantonal Hospital Graubünden and SAKK President; phone +41 81 256 66 47; email: [roger.vonmoos@ksgr.ch](mailto:roger.vonmoos@ksgr.ch)
- Dr. Peter Durrer, Head of Quality Assurance, Regulatory Affairs & Pharmacovigilance SAKK, phone +41 31 508 42 05; email: [peter.durrer@sakk.ch](mailto:peter.durrer@sakk.ch)

### **About SAKK**

The Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) is a non-profit organization, which has been conducting clinical trials in oncology since 1965. Its primary objective is to research new cancer therapies, to develop existing treatments further and to improve the chances of a cure for patients with cancer. This takes place through cooperative projects within Switzerland and in collaboration with centers and study groups abroad. The SAKK is supported by a service-level agreement with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and also by partners such as the Swiss Cancer League and Swiss Cancer Research. For more information, please visit [www.sakk.ch](http://www.sakk.ch), [info@sakk.ch](mailto:info@sakk.ch).