

SAKK / Celgene «Life Grant» 2019

On 22 November 2019, the third «Life Grant» was awarded at the annual meeting of the Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Klinische Krebsforschung, SAKK). The research award honours a project in the field of pancreatic carcinoma (pancreatic cancer) and is supported by SAKK as well as Celgene GmbH.

Pancreatic carcinoma is one of the most aggressive forms of cancer. A diagnosis



From left to right:
 Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos (SAKK),
 Dr. med. Matea Pavic (winner),
 Dr. Erich Weber (Celgene GmbH)

in most cases means a low chance of survival as well as severe impairment of quality of life both, for patients and their caregivers. This is where the research award from SAKK and Celgene comes in: «The «Life Grant» supports a research project for the treatment of pancreatic cancer, which aims to improve the life quality for all concerned», says Jury President and SAKK President Prof. Dr. med. Roger von Moos.

The winning project from Dr. med. Matea Pavic addresses a symptom many patients with pancreatic carcinoma have to deal with: pain. «Once a diagnosis is made, metastases have usually already formed in the body and the primary tumour in the pancreas has often already progressed locally and grown into adjacent organs or nerves. The complaints ori-

ginating from the tumour itself and can be treated effectively with local radiotherapy, significantly reducing the symptoms», says Matea Pavic. Radiotherapy is intended to complement standard chemotherapy, which aims to improve the overall prognosis. The researcher stresses: «We want to provide a complement to chemotherapy, not replace it.» her research project has the objective to control and prevent pain through so-called SBRT (Stereotactic Body Radio Therapy), a precise, high-dose radiation over a few days. The examinations are exclusively carried out for diagnosed patients with good general health and performance status. The radiation therapy device MR-LINAC is used for the treatment. Its MRI imaging is characterised by excellent soft tissue contrast, which facilitates the focus of radiation on the tumour itself and helps to protect the adjacent organs and normal tissue structures at risk.

The jury of the «Life Grant» believes that this study can significantly contribute to an improved management of pain in connection with pancreatic cancer in the future. «It might even be possible to decrease the dose of painkillers this way, resulting in less side effects and considerably improving the patient's quality of life», says Roger von Moos. For Matea Pavic it is important that this treatment option is also recognized by other oncology specialists. Thanks to the «Life Grant», the first phase of the study can be

advanced. Next, the study will be submitted to the Ethics Committees in Zurich and Munich: The study will be carried out in cooperation with Munich University Hospital LMU, which also has an MR-LINAC. Other centres are currently in talks with regard to participating in the study. So far, the MR-LINAC has only been in operation at a few centres across Europe. The start of the study and patient recruitment is anticipated for the second quarter of 2020.

The invitation to tender for the «Life Grant» was met with widespread interest in different cancer therapy disciplines. Various research projects were submitted from the fields of surgery, medical oncology and radiotherapy. They all aim to further improve the treatment of pancreatic carcinoma and patients' quality of life.



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About SAKK

The Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Klinische Krebsforschung, SAKK) is a non-profit organization, which has been conducting clinical studies in Oncology since 1965. Its most important objective is to research new cancer therapies, to further develop existing treatments and to improve the chances for cancer patients of being cured. This occurs through cooperation within Switzerland and in collaboration with foreign centres and study groups. 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 (Krebsliga Schweiz) and the Swiss Cancer Research Foundation (Krebsforschung Schweiz). Further information is available at: www.sakk.ch