

It was a great privilege to start my Clinical Research Fellowship in Lung Cancer in July 2018 at the renowned Christie NHS Foundation Trust in Manchester, England, under the lead of Prof Fiona Blackhall. The main purpose of the ongoing fellowship is to gain a deep expertise in lung cancer care in all its particulars and to achieve profound knowledge in translational and clinical lung cancer research.

The clinical part of my fellowship consists of doing four lung cancer clinics a week of which one is a standard of care clinic with a broad spectrum of patients with small-cell (SCLC) and non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) treated with classical cytotoxic chemotherapy, immunotherapy, chemo-immunotherapy or targeted therapy in case of a sensitizing driver mutation. In a further clinic that focuses exclusively on patients with stage III disease I have the true pleasure to very closely collaborate with the colleagues of the radio-oncology department under the lead of Prof Corinne Faivre-Finn to evaluate and treat patients with radical, curatively intended combined chemoradiation therapy, an aggressive treatment approach that requires profound clinical experience which I appreciate to learn within that clinic. Additionally, I perform two trial clinics where all patients are treated on international phase-2 or phase-3 trial protocols. Moreover, I regularly see patients with complex tumour diagnoses referred for a second opinion.

The research part of my fellowship includes a broad field of activity with a variety of different research tasks. As a clinical research fellow I lead on four international multi-center phase-2 and phase-3 trials and overlook the studies' screening, ongoing treatment, drug efficacy and toxicity which I regularly present and discuss within the lung expert team on site. Additionally, I am responsible for an impeccable study documentation, data collection, serious adverse event reporting and I represent the Christie lung team in study related telephone conferences. For possible upcoming trials I was given the responsibility to pre-screen potential studies to assess oncological relevance and feasibility before evaluation in the academic team.

My scientific key activities are reflected in the work of my own original research projects I conduct within a competent and highly organized team of cancer researchers and scientists. I concentrate on three main projects: In a pilot study we evaluate the utility of circulating tumour DNA analysis to predict cancer relapse in patients with stage III lung cancer treated with radical chemoradiation therapy. To my knowledge we succeeded to build up the largest existing stage III lung cancer cohort with longitudinal circulating tumour DNA samples pre-, during and post-chemoradiation therapy alongside a detailed clinical data collection. In an other research project we assess the use of computational CT-scan texture analysis, also known as "radiomics", as a possible predictive marker for response to first-line anti-PD-1 immunotherapy in patients with NSCLC. In a third project we investigate the impact of a p53 co-mutation in EGFR mutant NSCLC under targeted tyrosine kinase inhibition.

Participating in the Christie's daily routine procedures I have the great pleasure to work with Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) which are highly trained nurses who are seeing patients alongside me in clinic to support patients in delivering complex treatment information, to help set up individual support if needed and to facilitate acute services in case of unplanned urgencies. The CNS support is a service I greatly appreciate because it is freeing up a Doctor's resources and significantly increases productivity and efficiency of in- and outpatient lung cancer care in favour of individual well-being.

One of the most priceless experiences performing this fellowship is the privilege to work with and get known to internationally highly reputable key opinion leaders in the field of lung cancer care. I was given the chance to collaborate with local as well as international lung cancer experts in Europe and had the pleasure to first-author a treatment algorithm for immunotherapy based first-line treatment for NSCLC patients as well as a therapy recommendation for RET rearranged NSCLC. Moreover, I had the chance to co-author a detailed review on immunotherapy in stage III disease and the use of immunotherapy in EGFR mutant lung cancer patients within a distinguished team of international lung cancer experts. All papers will be published shortly in eminent international journals.

To perform lung cancer care as a Medical Oncologist for me is an extremely fulfilling task I enjoy with great passion. That I have been given the opportunity to undertake this fellowship is a great honor for me and a big step in my professional and personal development. Living this enriching and precious experience was only made possible with the SAKK / Janssen fellowship support for which I am humbly and emphatically thankful. I am eagerly looking forward to implementing my acquired expertise into practice in Switzerland with the aim to perform lung cancer care and lung cancer research on a standard of excellence.

Dr. med. Christoph J. Ackermann

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