

Young Oncology Academy: Curriculum

1. Background

Many more patients will develop cancer in the near future and improved therapeutic options will increase the length of treatment. Identification of new driver mutations and the mechanisms of how to use the immune system to treat cancer will lead to a further fragmentation of diagnoses and will rapidly increase complexity, thus resulting in a sub-specialization in the field. In order to successfully deal with these imminent challenges, it is vital to promote talented young oncologists.

For many obvious reasons, not least to secure the future of clinical research in oncology in Switzerland, SAKK should make it a priority to actively support the career development of our young oncologists.

2. Scope

This program should help to identify and train young oncologists to become active players in clinical and translational research, teach them how to take responsibility for a trial and how to successfully run and publish a study. Key components for academic success, besides talent and ambition, are:

The ability

1. to gain and process knowledge,
2. to present a project or completed trial, and to critically discuss its strengths and weaknesses,
3. to interact with local, national and international peers, members of a multidisciplinary team and basic researchers and to form collaborations with these professionals,
4. to write and publish a manuscript or grant proposal;
5. to learn how to interpret the statistics,
6. to conduct a study.

Also crucial for the opportunity to perform clinical research, specifically with regard to an active mentorship, is the commitment of the employer in terms of granting protected time to the applicant.

3. Program

The program proposal is aimed at the following six components. It is sponsored by SAKK and supported by an unrestricted grant by several pharmaceutical companies.

3.1. Knowledge

The participants are sponsored by the Young Oncology Academy to visit the ESMO congress, or EHA (for hematologists) or ESTRO (for radio-oncologists), ESP (for pathologists) respectively. They will focus on one of the more common cancer types, in which they attend at least the proffered paper sessions. They prepare the meeting program with the support of the mentor and they should attempt to participate in all types of sessions: presidential symposia, educational sessions, poster discussions, poster presentations, controversy sessions, young oncologist masterclass, etc.

3.2. Presentation skills

The participants will take part in a full-day presentation skill course to learn and improve their presentation skills.

After attending the congress, the participants will prepare a presentation of the congress highlights in their selected focus, again with the help of their mentors. All participants will then present their talk to the faculty. The faculty will comment on both the style and content of each presentation.

After some adjustments, these presentations will be given at the SAKK semi-annual meeting in November.

3.3. Networking

At the SAKK semi-annual meeting in November, the participants will be formally introduced as members of the Young Oncology Academy.

In addition, the participants have to attend and will be introduced at the in-between meetings of the respective SAKK project group.

The participants should also be invited to local educational events (such as Onko-lunches, etc.) outside their hospital to give their presentation.

3.4. Writing skills

In the year of their nomination, the participants will participate in the two-day course "How to write a scientific paper," sponsored by SAKK and held each September in Winterthur. Furthermore, they are to write a short review paper on the visited congress together for several magazines.

3.5. Trial development

The participants are encouraged to attend the ECCO-AACR-EORTC-ESMO workshop on methods in clinical cancer research with an SAKK project proposal within the next 2 years. The SAKK project group will offer the Principal Investigator position to the members of the program who have successfully completed the above-mentioned program and will support the participant with a senior PI.

3.6. Visiting Phase I Center

Participants of the SAKK Young Oncology Academy will take part in a one-day course to transfer important knowledge in the field of early-stage clinical trials end of June in St. Gallen. This module will include methodology and statistics in phase-1 trials, how to build relevant and appealing translational subprojects, negotiating aspects with industrial partners and learn major documentational aspects of phase-1 trials including informed consent process, (serious) adverse events reporting and how to prepare for audits. Members of the Young Oncology Academy are encouraged to visit a future meeting of SAKK's New Anticancer Treatments Project Group (NAT). 058 257 12 50

3.7. Statistics

In this course the participants will get an overview about statistical principles in oncological trials. The course will cover topics like hypothesis testing (including type I and II error, power, clinically relevant difference as well as p-values), Kaplan-Meier plots and hazard ratios. Furthermore, we will also discuss multiple testing and associated topics including designs with multiple endpoints and subgroup analyses.