

Annual Portrait

2024

SAKK in Figures



1 network

for Clinical Cancer Research with a global impact

20

research groups

conduct cross-center clinical cancer studies across all types of cancer and all disciplines throughout Switzerland

11

young oncologists

who joined the Young Oncology Academy 2024 to make contributions to oncology

67

active clinical trials

— thereof 27 actively recruiting



69 employees

—a dedicated team with 58.3 full-time positions—make an effort for better chances of recovery and improved quality of life for patients

792

patients

newly recruited into trials in 2024, trusted in our research and participated in our trials. Thank you!

38

scientific articles

published, 18 poster presentations and 23 oral presentations at major oncology congresses



8 awards

for cancer research projects, honored by SAKK and partners

12

SAKK projects

and four external research ideas were discussed with the Patient Advisory Board

The Positive Trends Continue

2024 has brought many successes for Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK). The number of trials and patients are growing – just in time for our 60th anniversary in 2025.



The year began with an extensive search for a new CEO. In September, we welcomed Vincent Gruntz to the role. Being an exceptional person and leader, he brings in fresh energy and innovative ideas, and he has already transformed the SAKK Competence Center significantly.

Our financial recovery continues to accelerate, supported by a solid financial position that allows us to invest more in clinical trials. The SAKK Network Trial Award was successfully granted again in 2024. However, we decided to pause the award for 2025 to better support the many excellent trial proposals already in the pipeline. In 2024, the number of open trials and patients has increased, and we plan to open 21 new trials in 2025. This positive trend reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of the Project Groups, the Working Groups, the Sections and the Competence Center.

2024 also saw the start of a new strategic cooperation with Cancer Trials Ireland, with the first joint trials currently in development. The launch of the first Swiss Personalized Oncology (SPO) clinical trial project marked an important step in our cooperation with the Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN). SAKK has also made important contributions to the Coordinating Platform for Clinical Research (CPCR) and will actively participate in its further development. We have also renewed our commitment to

Oncosuisse, becoming a vital partner in developing the Swiss National Cancer Plan in 2025.

All of this is boding well for our upcoming 60th anniversary in 2025. This milestone is an opportunity to honor our dedicated teams at the Member Sites, the Competence Center, as well as the contributors in the Scientific Committee and the Research Groups. A heartfelt thank-you to everyone involved!

Our gratitude also extends to our partners in federal agencies, industry, funding organizations and international cooperative groups. A recent analysis by our Competence Center highlights the significant role SAKK plays in Swiss Clinical Cancer Research: We participated in 64% and sponsored 34% of all interventional, multicenter, academic oncology trials in Switzerland between 2017 and 2021.

Thank you for your engagement and loyalty. Your continued support has been, and will remain, essential for our ongoing success.

Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless
SAKK Board President

Contents

Editorial by the President

The Positive Trends Continue03

Board

Innovative Cancer Research for Switzerland06



Editorial by the CEO –
a Successful 2024

Since joining SAKK as CEO in September 2024, Vincent Gruntz reflects on his first months in office – highlighting meaningful encounters, key milestones, and a strong outlook for 2025.

SAKK Competence Center

Improving Trials, Processes and Statistics08

Quality and Compliance

SAKK Advances Digital Solutions09



10

Young Oncology Academy:
Promoting the Next Generation

The 2024 Young Oncology Academy supports the next generation of oncologists. Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless explains how the mentoring program empowers young talent in research.

Research Groups	
Lung Cancer – New Proposals and Review Progress	14
SAKK Patient Advisory Board	
Successful Growth and Integration into Trial Development	19
Our Publications and Trials	
Trial Results and Presentations	21
New Pace, Closer Connections	23

Outlook	
Ready for Long-Term Success	26
Link to Financial Statements	
Imprint, Publishing Details	27



**SAKK 41/13 Aspirin reduces
Colon Cancer Recurrence**

The Aspirin trial confirmed that daily aspirin significantly reduces the recurrence of colon cancer in patients.

Our Board

Our mission is to provide cancer patients in Switzerland access to innovative treatments. Through our research, we optimize therapies to improve recovery outcomes, extend life expectancy, and enhance the quality of life for those affected.

We are supported by leading oncology specialists and committed political representatives.



Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. nat. Sacha Rothschild, Vice President; Prof. Dr. med. Richard Cathomas; Dr. iur. Christian Rathgeb-Cavigelli; Marianne Binder-Keller, Councillor of States; Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless, President; Dr. oec. HSG Willy Oggier; Silvia Schenker; Prof. Dr. med. Urban Novak

Board members from left to right

We sincerely thank all Board members for their valuable support in the advancement of clinical cancer research.

A Successful 2024, a Promising 2025



Vincent Gruntz has joined SAKK as the new CEO in September 2024. We've asked him about his observations during his first months in the role, his efforts in concluding 2024 and his outlook for 2025.

What were your personal highlights in your new role so far?

Vincent Gruntz: Meeting our members has been my personal highlight. Clinical oncologists dedicate time to research despite their busy schedules, driven by a passion for improving care. The team at the Competence Center in Bern combines unique skills and experience with a strong drive to help cancer patients live better lives. In 2024, I feel we have grown significantly as a team and with our network of researchers.

And what were your highlights from a business perspective?

Vincent Gruntz: Reflecting on 2024, we can definitely celebrate financial successes. I am also very proud of the milestones we reached. We have introduced a modular approach to clinical trial services, tailored to our academic trials. And we have continued to streamline our processes, which will save us several months in delivering future trials.

What excites you about 2025?

Vincent Gruntz: In 2025, we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of SAKK. I am excited to implement our new strategy FOCUS 2025+. It aims to increase funding for ongoing trials, enhance customer focus, improve cost efficiency, and raise our profile beyond the research community to attract new partners.

What are the key challenges awaiting SAKK in 2025?

Vincent Gruntz: Securing funding for non-profit academic clinical cancer research in Switzerland is a major challenge. The rise of large government programs in other countries threatens Switzerland's leading position. Improving conditions, especially funding, is crucial. Currently, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) allocates limited funds to clinical research. Collaborating with authorities to create favorable conditions for biotech start-ups and developing innovative programs can strengthen Switzerland's role. Research groups drive SAKK's efforts. Maintaining high engagement and solidarity among our network – which includes university hospitals, private, and cantonal hospitals – significantly contributes to our unique standing in Swiss research.

Improving Trials, Processes and Statistics

More trials, streamlined processes and new statistical tools: In 2024, the Clinical Science and Clinical Operations department saw empowerment on several levels. While the number of new trials doubled, the SAKK statistics team started publishing R packages and evolving the SCTO platforms.



Performance of Trial and Patient Numbers

In 2024, the Clinical Operations department saw an increase in trial activities. With nine newly opened trials, this number almost doubled compared to the previous year. We recruited 792 patients in 27 trials, including registry trials. Of these, 452 were enrolled in prospective trials. Six of the ongoing trials closed to new enrollment. In addition, the ClinOps team oversaw 40 active trials closed for enrollment in 2024.

Optimizing Processes

In 2023, we made minor adjustments to our processes. In the summer of 2024, we intensified the efforts to optimize processes aiming to accelerate clinical trial set-up, provide more targeted stakeholder support, and increase efficiency. We identified various levers to maintain our high quality while saving time. We are very confident that the implemented measures and the proposed actions for 2025 will significantly improve our performance.

The survSAKK R Package

As part of our process optimization efforts, the SAKK statistics team began developing R packages to make statistical analyses and creating graphs more efficient and reproducible.

The first R package, survSAKK, was published on GitHub and CRAN in August 2024. It simplifies visualizing survival curves and provides customizable Kaplan-Meier curves. Its development was supported by a programming grant from the Statistics and Methodology Platform by the Swiss Clinical Trial Organization (SCTO).

Actively Involved in SCTO Platforms

The SCTO has a nationwide network of interconnected platforms for clinical research professionals. SAKK has been actively involved in seven of the eight platforms. At the Safety Platform, we contributed to the "Easy Guide to Clinical Studies" tool and participated in the Data Management Platform project to develop a common infrastructure for the CDMS. Additionally, SAKK was heavily involved in the R Validation Project on the Statistics and Methodology Platform.

Christine Biaggi Rudolf

Chief Operations Officer (COO)



Further information at
www.sakk.ch/en/annual-report

SAKK Advances Digital Solutions

The SAKK adopted the Human Research Act (HRA) ordinance amendments, ensuring compliance with the new regulations. Throughout 2024, SAKK advanced digital solutions, such as electronic SAE reporting, in the EDC system for new trials. SAKK also introduced a swissethics-approved GCP Refresher Course.



Implementing Revised Ordinances of the HRA

The amendments to the ordinances relating to the Human Research Act came into force on November 1, 2024. The SAKK Quality and Compliance unit promoted and monitored the timely adoption of the new legislation across the entire organization, ensuring compliance with the amended regulatory framework.

In 2024, the SAKK took further important steps towards future competitiveness by advancing modern digital solutions (see box below). This included substantial progress in the implementation of electronic Serious Adverse Event (SAE) reporting directly in the electronic data capture (EDC) system in all new SAKK trials. Constructive feedback and exchange with member site staff enabled the safety office and clinical data management teams to create simplified access to the EDC system for investigators. This tailored access will facilitate the signing and reporting of SAEs, allowing sites to more easily comply with reporting timelines.

Introducing a New swissethics-Approved Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Refresher Course

SAKK continues to support the Swiss clinical research community with high-quality, relevant education that ensures compliance with ethical and regulatory standards in clinical trials.

Starting in 2024, SAKK offers a newly developed swissethics-approved Refresher Course, which covers the revised ordinances of the HRA. The course provides investigators and clinical trial staff with an essential update on GCP standards, regulations and laws.

Céline Hummel

Chief Quality & Compliance Officer

The Year of the Cloud and the Beginning of the AI Era

Of 18 active IT projects, twelve were completed in 2024. Multi-year projects such as the Cloud, CTMS, Reporting Tool project or Transformation through AI will continue to shape our efforts in 2025.

- **Cloud:** Six IT systems and the ERP system moved to the cloud in 2024. More IT systems will follow.
- **CTMS:** The Clinical Trial Management System (CTMS) provider Veeva won the demanding selection process and will replace Neutras in 2025.
- **Legacy systems:** Legacy systems such as the ticketing system and the intranet have been replaced by state-of-the-art solutions.
- **SPHN:** The IT side of the SAKK connection to the Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN) project has been completed, and the first (test) data has been delivered.

Promoting the Next Generation of Oncologists

The Young Oncology Academy (YOA) is designed to empower and inspire the next generation of oncologists. With ten mentors and eleven mentees, the 2024 edition once again provided young medical professionals a unique platform. Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless, Chair of the YOA, explains how this initiative enables young oncologists to make meaningful contributions to research.

Dr. Pless, what made the 2024 mentee cohort special, and what did they achieve?

Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless: The application process for the YOA 2024 was very competitive. We had to choose from a large pool of very qualified applicants, and the level of the 2024 class was very high to start with. The group harmonized quickly and connected right away – this is probably the most important factor for long-term success. It struck me as special that they seemed to enjoy the course on “How to write a scientific paper” the most. I had the impression they had some manuscripts ready to be written and thus found this course very helpful.

Can you share some examples of exceptional contributions or achievements by the 2024 mentees, whether in research projects, publications, or clinical advancements?

The group was very active as a whole, so everyone did very well. Just to point out two special achievements: Dr. Louisa Hempel already had a poster at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting showing her own scientific work,

which is a great achievement, especially at this stage in her career. Another example is Dr. Jonas Lötscher: He worked very hard during the year on preparing a SAKK Lung Cancer study proposal. By the end of the course, the proposal was ready to go – and was promptly accepted by the Lung Cancer Project Group. An outstanding accomplishment!

The Young Oncology Academy provides mentees with opportunities to attend major conferences like the ESMO congress by the European Society for Medical Oncology, the European Hematology Association (EHA), or the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO). What were the key takeaways for the participants during these events?

I believe that attending the first big scientific meeting, like ESMO or ASCO, has a lasting impact on everyone. So, it is important to ensure this experience is a good one for our young mentees. We try to prepare them as well as we can to navigate all the opportunities these conferences offer while giving them some time to digest it all, as well as to have fun and connect with each other. Overall, this seemed to be the case. I think our mentees had a good time at their meetings and benefited a lot, both scientifically and on a personal level.

Can you describe some of the innovative projects or clinical trials the mentees have been working on? How do these align with the academy's goals of fostering clinical and translational research?

I would like to highlight Dr. Lötscher's trial proposal again. In his earlier lab work, he had discovered in the lab that a high intracellular magnesium level was predictive for a better efficacy of immune-checkpoint inhibitors, and he had already laid out a

” There is a lot of talent in the YOA, and it is very uplifting to work with our mentees.



Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless, SAKK Board President

tentative mechanism of action for this finding. This important finding was published in *Cell* in 2023 and backed up by retrospective clinical data, for example from the SAKK 16/14 study. Dr. Lötscher has now developed an academic clinical trial to test this hypothesis in metastatic non-small cell lung cancer patients. This is an excellent example of the Swiss-lead bench-to-bedside academic research SAKK stands for.

How will the mentors contribute to the future success of the class of 2024?

The mentors should establish a personal relationship with their mentees and try to help advance their scientific career well beyond the YOA. It is crucial that the mentees pursue an academic career, which has become increasingly difficult. The additional workload and the often overly competitive research environment can be a turnoff. It is very important to us to provide an element of joy, too, and pass on the spirit of “achieving through teamwork.” We, as mentors, should make every effort to introduce the mentees to the project groups within SAKK and help them bring their research projects from proposal to realization. This process can take many years. Several former YOA participants are now very active within SAKK. This makes all of us very proud.

What kind of feedback did mentors share about their experience with the 2024 cohort? How has their input shaped the program's approach?

Mentors are generally really impressed by the mentees, their knowledge, their motivation and their eagerness to learn new skills. There is a lot of talent in the YOA, and it is very uplifting to work with our mentees. If time allows, I think we can offer

even more to these gifted young researchers. It is remarkable that most mentors love to support the YOA. We have a very low staff turnover; our mentors tend to stay.

Looking at the 2024 cohort's journey, what impact do you foresee their work will have on the field of oncology? How does the Academy plan to support them in their ongoing careers?

As mentioned above, I think we should introduce additional elements to the course. Such as trial development, grant applications, public patient involvement and many others. We will need to decide how we can include these elements without putting too much strain on both the mentors' and the mentees' resources. Since the first YOA, we have constantly evolved the program, and we will continue to do so. This is only possible thanks to the continued amazing assistance from the team at the Competence Center, the steady engagement of the mentors, and the vital and generous support from our industry partners. A big, heartfelt thank-you to all of you!

Cultivating talent for the future of oncology

Eleven promising talents were mentored by experts in the Academy 2024. The program covered clinical trial development, SOHC presentations, scientific publishing, and international congress participation. The participants were prepped for future oncology leadership roles. The topics of the presentations (SOHC 11/24) and publications (SZO 01/25) are outlined below.

Presentation SOHC 11/24	Publication SZO
Immune checkpoint inhibition and gynecologic cancers, Project Group Gynecological Cancer	ESTRO Highlights 2024: Two Clinical Trials on Cancer Treatment Using Modern Radiotherapy Mentee: Dr. med. Antonio Angrisani, EOC Bellinzona Mentor: Dr. med. Francesca Caparrotti, Clinique Générale-Beaulieu GE Specialty: Radio-oncology
Improving Perioperative Outcomes in Gastrointestinal Cancer – Personal Highlights from ESMO 2024, Project Group Gastro-intestinal	Improving Perioperative Outcomes in Gastrointestinal Cancer Mentee: Dr. med. Linus Dubs, Hospitals Schaffhausen Mentor: PD Dr. med. Lukasz Filip Grochola, Cantonal Hospital Winterthur Specialty: Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Surgery
ESMO 2024: Breast Cancer Highlights, Project Group Breast Cancer	Advances in Breast Cancer Treatment, HypoG-01, Keynote 522, and Natalee Trials Mentee: Dr. med. Bianca Giacomuzzi Moore, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV) Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Urban Novak, Inselspital Bern (University Hospital of Bern) Specialty: Oncology
ESMO 2024 Upper GI Highlights: Key takeaways from KEYNOTE 811 in HER2-pos. G/GEJ adenocarcinoma, Project Group Gastrointestinal Cancer	Advances in HER2-Positive Gastric and Gastroesophageal Cancer: Insights from KEYNOTE-81 Mentee: Dr. med. Louisa Hempel, University Hospital Zurich Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Viviane Hess, University Hospital Basel Specialty: Oncology/Hematology
CNS and supportive therapies, Working Group Supportive, Palliative and Geriatric Oncology	First in human study of the mRNA-based cancer vaccine CVGBM in patients (pts) with newly diagnosed and surgically resected MGMT unmethylated glioblastoma (GBM): first results from the dose escalation phase Mentee: Dr. med. Dennis Hoch, Inselspital Bern (University Hospital of Bern) Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless Specialty: Oncology/Hematology
Recent Developments in Lung Cancer: Insights from the ESMO Congress, Project Group Lung Cancer	Pembrolizumab dose reduction in metastatic NSCLC – an opportunity for improving cost-effectiveness? Mentee: Dr. Jonas Lötscher MD-PhD, University Hospital Basel Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. nat. Sacha Rothschild, Cantonal Hospital Baden Specialty: Hematology
Immune checkpoint inhibition and gynecologic cancers, Project Group Gynecological Cancer	PD-1 Blockade in Early Endometrial and Cervical Cancers Mentee: Dr. Anton Oseledchik, University Hospital Basel Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Intidhar Labidi-Galy, Geneva University Hospitals HUG Specialty: Medical Oncology

Presentation SOHC 11/24

Advances in cellular therapies,
Project Group Leukemia

Highlights in Bladder Cancer from ESMO 2024:
another year with practice-changing trials?,
Project Group Urology

Highlights of ESMO Congress 2024: Prostate
cancer, Project Group Urology

Updates on cancer of unknown primary (CUP),
Project Group Developmental Therapeutics

Publication SZO

Advances in cellular therapies

Mentee: Dr. med. Laurent Schmied, University Hospital Basel

Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Gabriela Baerlocher, Clinic for Hematology and Oncology,
Hirslanden Zurich

Specialty: Hematology

ESMO 2024 Highlights in Bladder Cancer

Mentee: Dr. med. Silvan Sigg, Cantonal Hospital Lucerne (LUKS)

Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Richard Cathomas, Cantonal Hospital Graubünden

Specialty: Urology

Highlights ESMO Congress 2024: Prostate Cancer

Mentee: Dr. Fabio Turco, EOC Bellinzona

Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Richard Cathomas, Cantonal Hospital Graubünden

Specialty: Urology

Updates on Cancer of Unknown Primary (CUP) – Highlights from the Congress
of the European Society of Pathology (ESP) 2024 and beyond

Mentee: Dr. Viola Vetter, University Hospital Zurich

Mentor: Prof. Dr. med. Laurence de Leval, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV)

Specialty: Pathology

YOA Class of 2024

In 2024, these eleven mentees successfully completed the Young Oncology Academy. Over the course of a year, guided by renowned faculty members, participants engaged in diverse projects and gained valuable insights into clinical and translational research. A key focus was equipping young talents with the skills to develop, manage, execute, and publish clinical trials effectively.



Dr. med. Silvan Sigg, Cantonal Hospital Lucerne (LUKS); Dr. Anton Oseledchyk, University Hospital Basel; Dr. Jonas Lötscher MD-PhD, University Hospital Basel; Dr. med. Laurent Schmied, University Hospital Basel; Dr. med. Dennis Hoch, Inselspital Bern (University Hospital of Bern); Dr. Viola Vetter, University Hospital Zurich; Dr. med. Louisa Hempel, University Hospital Zurich; Dr. med. Bianca Giacomuzzi Moore, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV); Dr. Fabio Turco, EOC Bellinzona; Dr. med. Antonio Angrisani, EOC Bellinzona; Dr. med. Linus Dubs, Hospitals Schaffhausen

We wish you every success in your future endeavors and look forward to seeing you thrive within our SAKK research groups.

Research Group Lung Cancer



In 2024, the group operated according to the SAKK regulation through a core team that discussed new proposals, while the entire group met annually, semi-annually, and in between to review progress.

The core team of the research group Lung Cancer with medical oncologists and representatives of other disciplines, met every two months.

Trials

For operable NSCLC

- The SAKK 16/18 (for patients with stage IIIA, N2, based on the 8th classification) has been recruiting patients to undergo chemo-radiotherapy and durvalumab, followed by surgery, and then treated with maintenance durvalumab; this study is led by Dr. med. L. Mauti and new German sites have been activated in 2024 with the goal to include 90 patients.

- In 2024, the ETOP 25-23 ADOPT-lung (neo-adj. +/- adj durva) has been finalized to test the value of ctDNA in patients' selection upon resection and neoadjuvant chemo-immunotherapy (to be opened early 2025)

For metastatic NSCLC:

- The IP-IIO-622_SAKK 69/22 is a study using intra-tumoral injection of IP-001 following thermal ablation in patients with advanced solid tumors (currently only NSCLC) as a Multicenter Phase 1b/2a trial. It has been recruiting with in Bellinzona, Chur and St. Gallen
- The ETOP 18-21 AMAZE-lung (for patients with NSCLC EGFRmut progressing after a previous third generation EGFR-TKI) finished accrual in May 2024 and data will be presented at an upcoming meeting in 2025
- For oligometastatic NSCLC, the CHESS-2 trial is assessing the efficacy of radical immunotherapy and chemotherapy, stereotactic radiotherapy and surgery in patients with synchronous oligometastatic NSCLC; it has been opened in 2024 and ongoing
- The SalVage Phase III Trial (For patient with oligometastatic or oligopersistent NSCLC) has opened in 2024. The study investigates the role of Local Ablative Treatment in this setting
- For patients with HER2 mut NSCLC, the SOHO-2 has been opened in two centers in Switzerland where SAKK will function as a network for patients' recruitment in this rare setting



Vice presidents of the Project Group Lung Cancer: Dr. med. Laetitia Mauti, Prof. Dr. med. Alfredo Addeo, on the left side: Prof. Dr. med. Alessandra Curioni-Fontecedro

For SCLC

- For SCLC extensive disease, the ETOP 23-22 RAISE has been opened, with the use of niraparib in SLFN11-positive ED-SCLC.
- The SAKK 15/19 has recruited all patients. This study examines the role of radiotherapy consolidation after chemoimmunotherapy (with durvalumab) in extensive disease. Prof. Dr. med. A. Addeo has presented the data at the ESMO Annual Meeting in 2024.

Registries

- The LUCA Registry for EGFR Post-Osi and Exon 20 Mut NSCL is open and recruiting
- A Registry for Thymic Tumors is in development (M. Imbimbo)

In total, 79 patients have been included in studies in 2024.

Publications

- The SAKK 19/17 was published in 2024 (doi: 10.1016/j.ejca.2024.113600)
- The BEAT-MESO trial has been presented at ASCO 2024 and published in 2024 (doi: 10.1016/j.anonc.2024.12.014)
- The group has published in the Journal of Thoracic Oncology an overview of epidemiology and management of Lung Cancer in Switzerland. doi: 10.1016/j.jtho.2023.12.005.
- The translational research of the BOOSTER trials has been published in CCR (doi: 10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-24-0932)

Presentations at international conferences

- ETOP BEAT-Meso: ASCO – oral presentation
- ETOP CHES: ESTRO – oral presentation
- SAKK 15/19: ESMO – poster
- SAKK 16/14 (4x): ERS, SOHC, ESTS, SSP P – oral presentation
- SAKK 16/18 : ESTRO – oral presentation
- SAKK 16/XX: ESMO – poster
- SAKK 16/XX: ELCC – poster
- SAKK 17/18: WCLC – poster

Outlook

Several trials are under development

- For NSCLC Stage IV in 1st line: The study exploring the use of Magnesium in combination with standard of care (PI S. Rothschild)
- For NSCLC Stage III: The trial adopting a RT dose escalation with OAR sparing
- For NSCLC Stage IV in first line in frail patients: the study exploring the use of anti-PDL1 with or without dose-reduced chemo
- In collaboration with ETOP and Clinical Trials Ireland, several studies are under development

Project Group Lung Cancer

President

Prof. Dr. med. Alessandra Curioni-Fontecedro
Cantonal Hospital Fribourg (HFR) and University of Fribourg

Vice presidents

Dr. med. Laetitia Mauti
Cantonal Hospital Winterthur
Prof. Dr. med. Alfredo Addeo
Geneva University Hospitals HUG

We advance cancer care

The 20 research groups remained stable and impactful this year, driving scientific progress. These groups are vital for developing and refining trial proposals, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring top-quality research to deliver the best care to our patients.

Our specialized bodies, comprising 20 research groups, made a significant contribution to our scientific work. These groups have played a pivotal role in advancing our scientific endeavors. They serve as essential networks for originating and refining trial proposals, crucially evaluated by SAKK Directors' Committee.

Members of these research groups enjoy a unique opportunity to propose and discuss trials within their respective fields, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue with fellow experts. This exchange is paramount in enhancing the quality of our research and ensuring optimal care for our patients.

We extend heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved for their dedication and hard work in advancing clinical cancer research.

Project Groups

Breast Cancer

President

PD Dr. med. Marcus Vetter
Cantonal Hospital Baselland, Liestal

Vice president

Prof. Dr. med. Peter Dubsky
Hirslanden Klinik St. Anna, Luzern

Developmental Therapeutics

President

Prof. Dr. med. Anastasios Stathis
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Switzerland (IOSI)

Vice presidents

Dr. med. Dr. rer. nat. Christian Britschgi
Cantonal Hospital Winterthur
Dr. med. Martina Imbimbo
Oncology Institute of Southern
Switzerland (IOSI)
Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. nat. Markus Jörger
Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen

Gastrointestinal Cancer

President

Dr. med. Alexander Siebenhüner
Clinic for Hematology & Oncology
Hirslanden Zurich

Vice president

PD Dr. med. Sara De Dosso
Oncology Institute of Southern
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Gynecological Cancer

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University Hospital Zurich

Vice president

Dr. med. Corinne Widmer
University Hospital Basel

Lung Cancer**President**

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Cantonal Hospital Winterthur
Prof. Dr. med. Alfredo Addeo
Geneva University Hospitals HUG

Lymphoma**President**

Prof. Dr. med. Francesco Bertoni
Università della Svizzera italiana (USI)

Vice president

Prof. Dr. med. Thorsten Zenz
University Hospital Zurich

Urogenital Tumors**President**

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Vice president

Dr. med. Alexandros Papachristofilou
University Hospital Basel

Working Groups**Cellular Therapies****President**

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. George Coukos
Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV)

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PD Dr. med. Michael Daskalakis
Inselspital Bern (University Hospital
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Prof. Dr. med. Heinz Läubli
University Hospital Basel
Prof. Dr. med. Dominik Schneidawind
University Hospital Zurich

CNS Tumors**President**

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Vice president

PD Dr. med. Dr. phil. Emilie Le Rhun
University Hospital Zurich

Head and Neck Cancer**President**

Dr. med. Vittoria Espeli
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Vice president

Prof. Dr. med. Panagiotis Balcermpas
University of Zurich and University
Hospital Zurich

**Imaging in Diagnostic and Therapy
Monitoring****President**

PD Dr. med. Andreas Hötter
University Hospital Zurich

Vice president

Prof. Dr. med. Lukas Ebner
Inselspital Bern (University Hospital
of Bern)

Melanoma**President**

Dr. med. Joanna Mangana
University Hospital Zurich

Vice president

Dr. med. Ioannis Metaxas
Spital Thurgau AG

Sarcoma**President**

Dr. med. Antonia Digkila
Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV)

**Supportive, Palliative and
Geriatric Oncology****President**

Prof. Dr. med. David Blum
University Hospital Zurich

Vice president

Dr. med. Véréne Dougoud
Cantonal Hospital Fribourg (HFR)

Sections**Network for Cancer Predisposition
Testing and Counseling****President**

Dr. med. Manuela Rabaglio-Poretti
Inselspital Bern (University Hospital
of Bern)

Vice president

Dr. med. Rossella Graffeo
Oncology Institute of Southern
Switzerland (IOSI)

Network for Outcomes Research**President**

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Onkzentrum Zurich



Further information at
www.sakk.ch/en/annual-report

Our Patient Advisory Board

The Patient Advisory Board plays a crucial role in SAKK research projects by providing valuable patient perspectives on new clinical trial proposals. Their feedback enhances the clarity and accessibility of these proposals, strategically helping to align SAKK's work more closely with patient needs.



Standing, left to right: Dr. Isabelle Roos, Dr. Tourane Corbière, Lorenz Tanner, Helga Meier Schnorf, Dr. Bernd Hägele, Michael Emmenegger-Müller, Rosmarie Pfau
Sitting, left to right: Dr. Sander Botter, Dr. Ursula Ganz-Blättler, Aldo Fiscalini

We sincerely thank all members of the Patient Advisory Board for their continued commitment to advancing effective cancer therapies at all levels.

Successful Growth and Integration into Trial Development

Over the past two years, Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) has gained significant importance in clinical research, healthcare and education of healthcare professionals in Switzerland. SAKK has already made great strides. In 2024, the SAKK Patient Advisory Board experienced growth and proudly looks back on a challenging yet successful year. Among other things, the mandatory early involvement of SAKK patient partners in developing trials was implemented efficiently.

Meeting with investigators

Every first Wednesday afternoon of the month, the Patient Advisory Board invites investigators to present their research ideas in an online meeting. To help researchers quickly address aspects relevant to cancer patients, the Patient Advisory Board has developed a checklist and a slide template. This support helps identifying a project's leading question and relevance to cancer patients, identifying risks or challenges for participants, and outlining the trial design and end points. All of this should reflect patient needs. After each meeting, the Patient Advisory Board advises researchers on these aspects, provides their considerations in a Letter of Support, and records the key points from the patients' perspectives in a protocol. In 2024, twelve SAKK projects and four external research ideas were discussed. A survey revealed that these meetings are very valuable for researchers and patient partners, so they will continue in 2025. Fortunately, two patient partners became members of SAKK research groups and now actively participate in the core teams and group discussions.

Inspiring researchers

For the first time, PPI was a topic of interest at the Young Oncology Academy 2024. Presenting practical examples, patient partners Dr. Ursula Ganz-Blättler and Lorenz Tanner, along with Prof. Eva Segelov, oncologist and director of the Department of Clinical Research at the University of Bern, motivated young, promising talent for PPI. Lorenz Tanner, Ursula Ganz-Blättler, Dr. Tourane Corbière and Dr. Christine Aeschlimann gave lectures and provided valuable input at the EUPATI Switzerland patient expert courses as well as the CAS "Qualité en Soins" by the University Hospital of Geneva and the University of Geneva. At the SAKK summer semi-annual meeting in June 2024, the Patient Advisory Board operated a booth and connected with young and established researchers. Tourane Corbière represented the patients' perspective at a round table at the SAKK industry pool meeting. In an interview with LEADING OPINIONS magazine, the founding member of the Patient Advisory Board, Rosmarie Pfau, shares her experiences as a patient partner and patient advocate and leader of a large patient organization.



Please find the interview here:
www.universimed.com

Promoting PPI in Ticino

In February 2024, the Patient Advisory Board in collaboration with the Gruppo PPI of Istituto Oncologico della Svizzera Italiana (IOSI) and Prof. Cristiana Sessa organized the first patient forum in Italian entitled "Il coinvolgimento dei pazienti nella ricerca clinica" in Lugano. Following this successful public event, the Patient Advisory Board was invited by Prof. Cristiana Sessa to contribute to a scientific review paper on PPI in clinical oncology research. Due to her great



Dr. Ursula Ganz-Blättler, Member of the SAKK Patient Advisory Board

commitment and dedication, Ursula Ganz-Blättler was chosen as first author of the resulting paper “The active involvement of patients in oncology research”, published in Cancer Treatment Reviews journal in November 2024. The group from Ticino also won the SAKK-Gilead Expanding Horizons Award, and PPI training will continue at IOSI. The Patient Advisory Board is involved in creating courses and workshops to promote PPI in Ticino and ensure sustainable networking among patient partners.

First Swiss PPIE Symposium

Given the high dynamics of PPI and the multitude of new initiatives among SAKK members, we have initiated and pursued joint projects and initiatives in 2024. The year's highlight was the first Swiss symposium on Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) in healthcare. Christine Aeschlimann was a key pillar and driving force in the organizing committee that was supported by eight organizations. SAKK patient partners Tourane Corbière and

Ursula Ganz-Blättler led the comprehensive program, and SAKK conducted a workshop on PPI in research. The symposium was a great success with around 200 participants from all areas of healthcare. For 2025, the Patient Advisory Board advocates establishing a national network for PPIE in healthcare to involve healthcare users at all levels and facilitate collaboration between stakeholders.

Dr. Christine Aeschlimann

EMBA FH Senior Program Manager
Patient Advisory Board

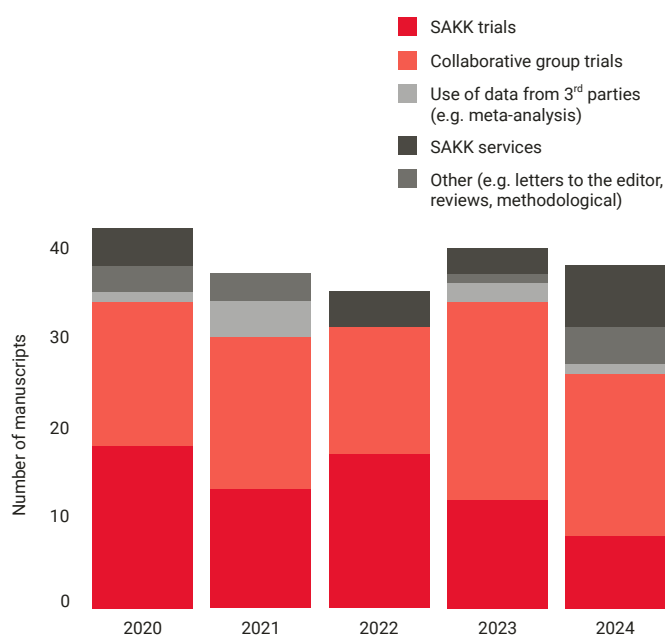
Achievements 2024: 38 Articles, 41 Presentations



I'm delighted we were able to publish several high-profile articles in prestigious journals.

Dr. phil. Stefanie Hayoz, Head of Statistics

In 2024, SAKK published 38 articles and presented 18 posters and 23 oral presentations at major oncology congresses. A highlight was the SAKK 41/13 Aspirin trial at ESMO Congress. The statistics team also produced eleven clinical trial reports and assisted with 24 non-SAKK projects, leading to seven manuscripts.



Last year, 38 articles involving SAKK appeared in various scientific journals. The number of articles is comparable to the previous years.

SAKK was well represented at the major oncology congresses as well as more local events with 18 posters and 23 oral presentations. A special highlight was the oral presentation of the SAKK 41/13 Aspirin trial at the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) Congress in Barcelona. This randomized placebo-controlled phase III trial investigated the use of adjuvant aspirin treatment in PIK3CA mutated colon cancer patients.

A summary table showing the number of manuscripts and conference presentations in comparison to the previous years can be found by scanning the QR code below.

As part of our statistical advisory work, we were also able to assist with about 24 smaller and larger non-SAKK projects. This year, our work on consulting cases lead to 7 manuscripts.

The statistics team produced 11 clinical trial reports, including 7 final reports for the authorities.



Further information at
www.sakk.ch/en/annual-report

Your Donation Gives Hope and a Future



A cancer diagnosis changes the lives of patients and their families from one moment to the next. With your support, we can give them new hope. For 60 years now, SAKK has enabled first-class clinical cancer research in Switzerland. Together with leading experts, we create innovative trials that improve the chances of a cure and give patients valuable time.

Every donation is an important building block towards our vision: a future without cancer. With your support, we can drive life-saving research, develop new therapies and ensure that as many people as possible benefit from them.

Charitable bequests: Leave a lasting legacy and support long-term cancer research with a testamentary donation. You can find more information on our website. <https://www.sakk.ch/en/donate>.

What your contribution achieves:

- Funding of clinical trials for new therapies.
- Developing personalized treatments for patients.
- Fostering collaboration between leading experts for better care.



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Together we will save lives. Thank you for your support!

New Pace, Closer Connections

2024 has marked a change of pace in project support at the Clinical Science department. Focused on developing new ideas into projects and clinical trials, we aim to improve patient survival rates and their quality of life. In addition to funding from public funds and large foundations, we actively seek support from smaller foundations to further advance our mission.



The year 2024 has marked a change of pace in the way we approach project support. SAKK's Clinical Science department has been focused on evolving new ideas into projects, clinical trials and treatment changes that improve patient survival rates and the day-to-day for patients and their loved ones.

A large part of these studies have been financed by public funds like the Swiss National Science Fund (SNSF) and large foundations such as the Swiss Cancer Research Foundation (KFS) or the Rising Tide Foundation. They are invaluable partners, supporting our vision with substantial subsidies that in some cases have funded entire trials.

However, our research needs more financial sources. Smaller independent foundations could partially fund trials or selected complementary activities. In 2024, we have reactivated the position of a fully dedicated medical writer to reconnect with foundations. This is an important step to connect with people who think, like us, that we can do more against disease and make a big difference.

Our activities depend heavily on pharmaceutical innovations. Until recently, we had approached companies only sporadically. Starting in 2024, the newly minted Medical Scientific Liaison is organizing and fostering these interactions. The goal is to foster relationships creating trust and understanding, even before we knock at their door with a project. This creates opportunities to find common goals and synergies. It also accelerates support requests and improves our prospects of realizing projects that rely on pharma connections.

With all of these actions, SAKK has been in a key position to develop cutting-edge research by bringing all the relevant stakeholders to the table. This opened new doors and created a stimulating atmosphere for our network and the competence center alike. As a result, 2024 saw more activated projects (nine versus four in 2023), and even more projects are planned for 2025 and beyond.

The fight against cancer requires multiple parties coming together with a shared vision. We are proud that SAKK plays a connecting role between federal institutions, non-profit funding agencies and the private sector.

PD Dr. Roch-Philippe Charles
Chief Scientific Officer (CSO)

Aspirin Reduces Colon Cancer Recurrence



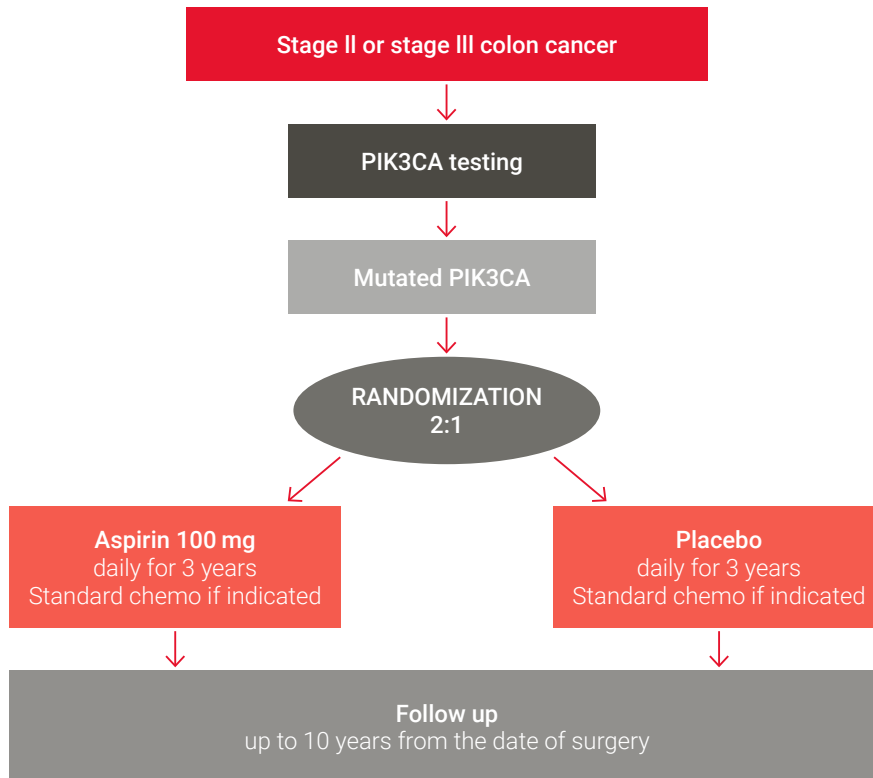
Aspirin as a new treatment option in stage II/III colon cancer patients with a PIK3CA mutation: The SAKK 41/13 Aspirin trial confirmed that daily aspirin significantly reduces the recurrence of colon cancer in patients with a PIK3CA mutation, showing a 43% improvement in disease-free survival. This prospective study supports aspirin as a safe, effective, and inexpensive adjuvant therapy.

There has been suggestive evidence in medical research that patients with a particular constellation in their colon cancer (so-called "PIK3CA mutation") benefit from a daily tablet of aspirin after surgery. However, this was based exclusively on retrospective studies and hence a potential distortion of the results due to bias cannot be excluded.

Therefore, the objective of the SAKK 41/13 Aspirin trial was to confirm in a prospective randomized fashion these interesting and potentially practice-changing findings of the above-mentioned retrospective studies. The most relevant question of this SAKK study was to provide us with a definitive answer whether or not aspirin decreases the risk of colon cancer coming back in patients with a PIK3CA mutation.

Patients after complete resection of stage II and III colon cancer were screened for an activating PIK3CA mutation. Only patients with a PIK3CA mutation were then allocated by chance into two groups: Two thirds were treated with daily aspirin 100 mg for three years, one third with placebo (study design below). The chemotherapy was independent of the treatment allocation.

The SAKK 41/13 Aspirin trial provided for the first time prospective-randomized evidence of a protective effect of adjuvant aspirin in patients with resected, PIK3CA-mutant stage II and stage III colon cancer. Indeed, we demonstrated a clinically relevant



Dr. phil. Stefanie Hayoz, Dr. med. et phil. Markus Jörger
on the left side: Prof. Dr. med. Ulrich Güller

43% improvement of the primary end point disease-free survival. The absolute difference of disease-free survival at five years exceeded 13% in favor of patients randomized to aspirin intake. Aspirin was very well tolerated without any relevant side effects.

Hence, the prescription of adjuvant aspirin should be considered by healthcare providers in patients with resected, PIK3CA-mutant colon cancer stage II and III as a new, safe and inexpensive option to prevent cancer recurrence.

The results of the SAKK 41/13 Aspirin trial were presented in the Proffered Paper Session at the annual conference of the European Society of Medical Oncology in Barcelona in September 2024. Furthermore, the study was awarded at the annual Swiss Oncology and Hematology Congress in Basel in November 2024 as best abstract in the Category "Clinical Solid Tumor Oncology."

Ready for Long-Term Success

2024 was marked by new impulses and initiatives. We are looking forward to taking this spirit of renewal and growth into 2025 and beyond – and to celebrating 60 years of SAKK.



The arrival of our new CEO, Vincent Gruntz, has given SAKK fresh energy, lots of enthusiasm and innovative ideas. Looking ahead, we are committed to driving progress on multiple fronts.

In the coming year, we will continue to improve the Competence Center by optimizing workflows and efficiencies. A key focus will be on substantially increasing the number of ongoing clinical trials. At the same time, we will enhance efficiency within our projects and working groups to ensure seamless collaboration.

Most importantly, we will begin implementing the Academic Lean Trial Initiative, which will make academic clinical trials simpler, faster and more affordable for all research groups. At the same time, we want to deliver more streamlined and faster processes through our Process Improvement Initiative. This initiative aims at gaining speed across our services at the Competence Center. We will also expand and refine the Young Oncology Academy, adding valuable features such as clinical trial development and grant application training.

To secure our long-term sustainability, we will intensify our efforts to strengthen SAKK's financial foundation. In collaboration with Swiss Cancer Research, we will launch a dedicated fundraising initiative. Additionally, we will actively contribute to developing a National Cancer Plan, ensuring that our expertise shapes the future of cancer research and treatment.

Finally, we are proud to celebrate our 60th anniversary in 2025 – a milestone that reflects decades of dedication and progress. This achievement is only possible thanks to unwavering support from our community, past and present. Together, we have come a long way; and together, we will continue to advance cancer research for the benefit of patients.

Prof. Dr. med. Miklos Pless
SAKK Board President

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It is available in German and English. The English
version is authoritative.

Annual Financial Report 2024



www.sakk.ch/en/annual-report

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