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PSCC and ITCC join forces to accelerate new and innovative projects against childhood cancers

Oncology is an area where patients' medical needs remain largely unmet. This is especially critical for children, adolescents, and young adults.

The collaboration between the Paris Saclay Cancer Cluster (PSCC) and the Innovative Therapies for Children with Cancer (ITCC) European network, both non-profit organisations under French law, is essential to accelerate innovation against cancer to develop appropriate therapeutic treatments, diagnostics, and medical devices for children with cancer.

Childhood cancer is a key concern for the PSCC and, of course, ITCC. Gustave Roussy was instrumental in developing this European network 20 years ago and is also one of the founders of the PSCC.

In Europe 35,000 young people are diagnosed with cancer yearly and 6,000 die despite major therapeutic progresses achieved through academic European and International clinical research over the last 50 years. Further improvements in cure rate and quality of cures will stem from introducing safe and effective new anticancer medicines in standard practice. There will be two types of medicines: i) anticancer medicinal products developed in adults that will prove to be relevant for childhood cancers by their mechanism of action; ii) specific pediatric anticancer medicinal products targeting biological alterations that are specific or mainly found in childhood cancers. Knowledge of the biology of pediatric malignancies continues to increase dramatically and there is an urgent need to accelerate drug discovery and drug development.

ITCC and PSCC aim to increase the number of innovative projects addressing childhood cancer. PSCC and ITCC are joining forces to connect their respective communities and help launch new innovative projects to fight childhood cancers.

Their approach relies on two key elements: first, to provide access to valuable knowledge and cutting-edge technologies for ongoing drug discovery and development initiatives; and second, to support the establishment of new projects and structures dedicated to the fight against childhood cancers.

A dedicated Childhood Oncology Working Group will be set up at the PSCC with two main objectives: (1) to contribute to each PSCC work package to ensure that the needs of children and young people with cancer are taken into account and (2) to propose specific actions to accelerate innovation against childhood cancers towards the development of an integrated paediatric cancer platform. This working group will be composed of both academic and industry stakeholders. It would be co-chaired by ITCC and Sanofi, which has a strong commitment to paediatric oncology.

ITCC will provide support and guidance to the PSCC Project Evaluation Committee in the assessment of projects. The aim is to ensure that childhood cancers are included as a relevant topic in all eligible proposals and to avoid missed opportunities. The PSCC and ITCC actively select proposals that specifically address childhood cancers.

"For more than 20 years, ITCC has been supporting innovation against childhood cancers at every stage of development, and we know that the earliest is the best! Collaborating with the Paris Saclay Cancer Cluster is a wonderful opportunity to be in touch with innovation projects at the earliest stage within the French Oncocluster project evaluation committee. Co-leading the paediatric oncology working group will be a shortcut to accelerate innovation against paediatric cancers towards the development of an integrated paediatric cancer platform," says Professor Gilles Vassal, paediatric oncologist at Gustave Roussy and President of the ITCC network.

Professor Eric Vivier, President of the PSCC, concludes: "With its solid network of 62 European paediatric oncology departments with expertise in conducting early phase trials in children and adolescents and 25 European research laboratories, ITCC can support innovation projects throughout the decision-making process of whether to develop a molecule or a device in children. They will be a key partner in increasing the number of innovative projects involved in developing solutions for childhood cancers and will also facilitate the implementation of trials across their network to ensure they are delivered on time and of high quality".

About childhood cancer:

Cancer is the leading cause of death by disease in children and adolescents, and the majority of children affected by cancer and childhood cancer survivors continue to suffer from the short- and long-term toxicity of treatment. The likelihood of surviving a diagnosis of childhood cancer depends on the country in which the

child lives: in *high-income countries*, more than 80% of children with cancer are cured compared to less than 30% in many *low- and middle-income countries*.

In France, approximately 2,500 children and adolescents are affected by cancer every year, accounting for around 1% of all the cancers diagnosed annually. The fight against cancers affecting children has been particularly developed through national Cancer Plan. In 2019, an extra €5 million was assigned for research into paediatric cancers. In the 2021-2030 plan, €20 million has also been allocated. This plan reinforces the efforts of the French government, which has made research in pediatric oncology a priority. Despite those efforts, pediatric cancers remain a public health problem that continues to have serious consequences for children and their families. Therefore, more effort is needed to cure more children and young people with cancer and to cure them better.

About the Innovative Therapies for Children with Cancer (ITCC) consortium:

Created in March 2003, ITCC gathers 62 European Paediatric Oncology Departments with expertise in conducting early phase trials in children and adolescents, and 25 European research laboratories. The aim of this organisation is to develop novel therapies for the treatment of paediatric and adolescent cancers in cooperation with regulatory bodies, pharmaceutical enterprises, parents and patients.

In January 2011 ITCC was established as a European Category 1 Network for Paediatric Research at the European Medicines Agency (EnprEMA).

Its structure comprises several Committees which take care and contribute to a particular issue in the development of novel therapeutic strategies in paediatric oncology.

More on: <https://www.itcc-consortium.org>

About the Paris-Saclay Cancer Cluster (PSCC):

Founded in February 2022 by Gustave-Roussy, Sanofi, Inserm, the Paris Polytechnic Institute and the University of Paris Saclay, the Paris Saclay Cancer Cluster (PSCC) is the first winner of the "Biocluster" call launched by Emmanuel Macron as part of France 2030. The PSCC has the support of more than 80 startups, biotechs and large pharmaceutical groups and has already been joined by Unicancer, the Institut Curie, AP-HP and Medicen.



The biocluster's mission is to orchestrate strong interactions between researchers, patient associations, healthcare professionals, startups, SMEs, big pharmaceutical companies and investors within a dynamic, integrated and virtuous ecosystem, anchored in Villejuif. Its objective is to accelerate the development of new cancer treatments, medical devices and diagnostic solutions in France. The PSCC will support industrial projects at different levels of

maturity and facilitate the connection of these projects with the experts, platforms and resources they need.

As a world-class cluster, the PSCC aims to position France among the world leaders in turning science into value for patients and society as a whole.

More: <https://www.parissaclaycancercluster.org>

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