

Alleanza contro il cancro

ACC's

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

The long experience gained by Alliance Against Cancer and its members on large international cancer research programmes in the field of experimental and applied cancer research and related disciplines makes it the natural contact point for the Italian participation in the building of the European coordination actions for the reduction of the existing fragmentation

For more information please contact:
International Affairs Coordination

 **Claudio Lombardo**
Istituto Nazionale per la Ricerca sul Cancro
Phone: +39 010 5737284 - 212 - 467
focalpoint.acc@istge.it
www.istge.it/tp_acc/index.htm

 **Filippo Belardelli**
Istituto Superiore di Sanità
Phone: +39 06 49906093 - 91
filippo.belardelli@iss.it
www.iss.it

Alliance Against Cancer (Alleanza Contro il Cancro - ACC) was established in 2002 with the task of promoting an active collaboration among Italian Cancer Institutes and Associations and to respond in an appropriate and harmonised way to the building of the European Area for Cancer Research.

In 2007, ACC established an ad-hoc Focal Point International Affairs office in order to create the conditions for the development of international cooperation initiatives.

The Focal Point works in close connection with the National Institute of Health (Istituto Superiore di Sanità – ISS), co-chairing the ACC International Programme, to identify and promote the best synergies among national programmes and international actions.

OVERVIEW OF ACC's INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

PROMOTION OF INCOMING, OUTGOING AND REINTEGRATION MOBILITY

This is a three-year international mobility scheme called Training through Research Application Italian Initiative (TRAIN), consisting of a total of 51 outgoing, incoming and reintegration fellowships, with the support of the PEOPLE Programme, within the Marie Curie COFUND Action "Co-Funding of Regional, National and International Programmes". Italy encounters difficulties to retain many of its most talented scientists and to provide an environment capable of attracting experienced scientists trained abroad. The TRAIN mobility scheme aims to partially overcome this strongly felt problem and to promote translational cancer research.

EUROCARE-5 ON THE OPTIMISATION OF THE USE OF CANCER REGISTRIES FOR CANCER RESEARCH PURPOSES

Thanks to a steadily growing number of participating registries, this study has provided regular and increasingly comprehensive publications on cancer patient survival in Europe. EUROCARE has collected and analysed survival data on patients diagnosed from 1978 to 2002 (EUROCARE-1 to 4), while survival of patients diagnosed in more recent years will be made available by the forthcoming EUROCARE-5. The EUROCARE database includes data on more than 13 millions of cancer diagnoses provided by 93 population-based cancer registries in 23 European countries, and it is a unique and valuable resource for analysing and comparing cancer outcomes.

PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN INFRASTRUCTURE "EUROPEAN BIO-BANKING AND BIOMOLECULAR RESOURCES" (BBMRI)

The Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure (BBMRI) is one of 44 initiatives funded by the European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), supported by the EU's 7FP to improve coordination between European biobanks. ACC is participating in the preparatory and development phase of the European biobanking infrastructure as part of the priorities of the whole International Cancer Plan and strategy.

PARTICIPATION IN THE "EUROPEAN CLINICAL RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK" (ECRIN)

The development of European infrastructures, as recommended by ESFRI, includes an infrastructure for clinical trials and biotherapies. At European level, there is an urgent need to harmonise rules and criteria to carry out biotherapy-based clinical trials and to increase the possibility to perform multi-centred clinical research. Within this framework, the link between the European infrastructure and the "Italian network for clinical trials and GMP facilities for tumour biotherapy" as part of the national cancer strategy of Alleanza Contro il Cancro is therefore appropriate.

PARTICIPATION IN THE "EUROPEAN ADVANCED TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE IN MEDICINE" (EATRIS)

ESFRI has included the creation of the EATRIS in the European infrastructure of the ESFRI roadmap with the aim of filling the gap currently existing in the translation of basic research findings into new treatments and medical products. This infrastructure will consist of a network of facilities distributed around Europe, each being equipped with cutting-edge technologies for translational research, which will be dedicated, among others, to in vitro and in vivo validation of therapeutic agents and approaches, and to the identification of innovative diagnostic procedures. The facilities working within EATRIS will closely interact with the "Infrastructure for Clinical Trials and Biotherapy" and the "European Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Infrastructure". In this context, it is therefore appropriate to link EATRIS with the National Cancer Networks developed in Programme 2 of Ministerial Decree dated July 21st, 2006. With reference to the Italian participation, ACC is part of a national consortium representing the Italian partners as a whole within EATRIS.

PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN ERA-NET CoCanCPG PROJECT AND THE ROLE OF THE "State of the ART in Oncology" PROJECT

Alliance Against Cancer (ACC) and the Italian Health Institute (ISS) play an active role in the ERANET project for the drawing up of European guidelines for cancer. The Italian participation is based on the START programme, which has already been accepted as a formal tool for the Members of the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes (OECI). The ISS is a natural partner, being recognised by the Italian Ministry of Health as the body responsible for implementing and maintaining the guidelines at a national level. START is an evidence-based, state of the art instrument on cancer treatment, created to support oncologists and physicians in their everyday oncology practice.

PARTICIPATION IN THE ACCREDITATION OF EUROPEAN COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTRES PROJECT

The project, financed by the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes (OECI), has been set up to define consensual quality standards and criteria for European oncology and to develop a tool for professionals enabling the internal and external (accreditation and intelligence, catering to the needs of health professionals, patients and policy makers. Such a model could subsequently be applied to other areas of healthcare. The EUROCANCERCOMS consortium will conduct an inventory of all existing information tools, their faults and flaws and requirements for the future. ACC participates in the project through the EUROCANCERCOMS' partner OECI and will support the task of communication with patients with the involvement of the Italian Federation of Oncological Voluntary Associations (FAVO) and the CIGNO Web project.

THE CONCORD PROJECT

The CONCORD study provides survival estimates for 1.9 million adults (aged 15-99 years) diagnosed with a first, primary, invasive cancer of the breast (women), colon-rectum, or prostate during 1990-94 and followed up to 1999, by use of individual tumour records from 101 population-based cancer registries in 31 countries in five continents.

CONCORD is the first worldwide analysis of cancer survival, with standard quality-control procedures and identical analytic methods for all datasets. The findings should facilitate joint assessment of international trends in incidence, survival, and mortality as indicators of cancer control. ACC, together with the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Atlanta, GA, USA), the Department of Health (London, UK) and the Cancer Research UK (London, UK), is aiming to contribute to better study the reason for the survival differences observed.

EUROCANCERCOMS

The lack of efficient communication among cancer health professionals, patients and policy makers remains a significant barrier to collaboration in the EU. Information overload and the existing fragmentation are seriously hindering the translation and application of research findings. The EU's EUROCANCERCOMS coordinating action aims to establish an integrated model for a Europe-wide cancer information and policy exchange portal that will provide a functional exchange system for accurate information and intelligence, catering to the needs of health professionals, patients and policy makers. Such a model could subsequently be applied to other areas of healthcare. The EUROCANCERCOMS consortium will conduct an inventory of all existing information tools, their faults and flaws and requirements for the future. ACC participates in the project through the EUROCANCERCOMS' partner OECI and will support the task of communication with patients with the involvement of the Italian Federation of Oncological Voluntary Associations (FAVO) and the CIGNO Web project.

NANOCANCER

Recent years have witnessed an unprecedented rapid growth in the area of biological sciences, with the explosion of nanosciences greatly benefiting from such development. Nanotechnologies offer a paradigm-changing opportunity to study normal and cancer cells and to interact with them in real time and at the molecular scale. Manipulation of the chemico-physical properties at molecular scale gives researchers the ability to build and use nanoparticles for different purposes, such as drug delivery vectors, image contrast agents vectors, diagnostic tools. ACC has launched a debate on nanoapplication in cancer research and care and is chairing a European Informal Group working on a EU application aiming at the development of innovative multidisciplinary approaches for the design, synthesis and evaluation of nanotools and nano-particle-based carriers for the detection, diagnosis and treatment based on targeted, controlled delivery of ions, DNA, siRNA therapeutic peptides and other non-conventional drugs. These nanoparticles will be delivered directly to the tumour cells using two distinct approaches: a) active delivery (by functionalising the nanoparticle surface with antibodies against specific tumour antigens), b) passive delivery (by using the EPR effect: a property by which certain sizes of molecules - ranging 150-200 nm - tend to accumulate in tumour tissue much more than they do in normal tissues).

ERANET ON TRASLATIONAL CANCER RESEARCH

To promote the exploitation of cancer research findings there is the need to better support the integration of the entire research continuum: from basic, preclinical and clinical research to the implementation and evaluation of interventions in prevention diagnosis, prognosis, treatment and care. This is the process of translation to be accelerated within Europe reducing fragmentation and duplication of efforts among individual EU Member States.

The proposed ERA-NET on Translational Cancer Research is based on the collaboration among EU Member States aiming at linking programmes by concentrating valuable financial resources and providing sufficient critical (financial and scientific) mass for tackling large-scale problems. Joint transnational calls will be launched in order to fill the most urgent gaps in European translational cancer research and to find the necessary complementarity to the aims of the already existing ERA-Net CoCanCPG (clinical practice guidelines) or those of EUROCOURSE, the ERA-Net on the coordination of cancer registries.

FURTHER INTERNATIONALLY ORIENTED ACTIVITIES

Starting from July 2009 the Focal Point International Affairs has been entrusted by Alleanza Contro il Cancro with the management of the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes' Coordinating Secretariat/Liaison Office through a special agreement between the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes and Alleanza Contro il Cancro. This formal recognition reflects the confidence and trust bestowed on the Focal Point's service efficiency and management capability in further stimulating the international activities of ACC's Members. The Italian Cancer community, which is OECI's major contributor in terms of membership (15 out of 67 members), is now one step closer to the OECI mission and is called to increase its efforts in strengthening the growth of the Organisation and its role within the European health scenario. Given its large network of centres, the Organisation has an impressive size in terms of bed capacity, treated patients, research and medical staff, and participates in the majority of cutting-edge European clinical trials. This huge potential can be fully exploited by acting in synergy with the key players in Europe's health care sector, such as ECCO, ESMO, EORTC, and Patients' Associations, as the only ones capable of addressing the public's real needs.