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123 QUESTIONS FOR...



Jean-Charles Soria,
Head of Gustave Roussy's
Drug Development
Department (DITEP)

DITEP is becoming increasingly interested in biotechnology enterprises. Why?

These small businesses are very innovative. They develop original molecules, the therapeutic or biomarker potential of which it is deemed necessary to investigate, since they might make it possible to detect the disease and to monitor the progress of the disease in patients. But they do not have the resources to conduct clinical research. The Gustave Roussy Institute is Europe's leading centre for phase-1 trials.

We regularly work with the biggest pharmaceutical manufacturers. Giving some room to biotechnology businesses enables us to broaden the range of avenues that we explore through the MOSCATO project!

Can you give us an example?

Eos, an Italian company, was proposing a molecule of Chinese origin that was potentially anti-angiogenic, i.e. preventing the formation of blood vessels, and that targeted molecular degradation of a receptor known as "FGFR". We tested it in about thirty patients for whom anti-angiogenesis treatment was not working, and it showed itself to be efficacious on the FGFR target. Reinforced by this initial clinical evidence, and with our support, Eos won the trust of large pharmaceutical manufacturers who are continuing to develop this drug, in particular for breast cancer.

You recently took part in the BIO Convention, in the United States. Can you tell us about it?

BIO brings together thousands of businesses: biotech companies, pharmaceutical manufacturers, investors, etc. I represented Gustave Roussy alongside Valérie Hélin, from Cancer Campus (cf. News). We met many businesses (US, Chinese, Russian, etc.) who were interested in developing in France. We reassured them about our capacity to receive them. ■

NEWS CANCER CAMPUS THE LONG-TERM PLANS ARE UNVEILED

The project to develop the ZAC (mixed development area) will be validated by the end of the year. The long job of preparing it is finished, and the districts it plans to have built around the Gustave Roussy Institute will be very attractive for the economy, for science, and for citizens.



Gustave Roussy has always attracted medical innovation and technological progress. The building of this campus that will extend within a ZAC (mixed development zone) of 80 hectares, follows in the Institute's footsteps in terms of treatment and research, while also bringing public transport services and an economic environment conducive to its development. The first buildings of the ZAC should open their doors as early as 2018, in particular for the businesses who are interested by the potential of the site.

Some of them have already laid the foundations for their future locations. Thus, in addition to Gustave Roussy's own development projects, the Marie-Lannelongue Hospital, specialised in thoracic surgery, currently located in Les Hauts-de-Seine, is considering moving there in order to reinforce its synergies with the Institute. Ionis, the private higher education group, is also planning to locate there. The Université Paris-Sud is going to locate some infrastructures there for its first year common medical studies (PACES) students preparing for their competitive entrance examination, and for its students on post-graduate DESS courses, paramedical science courses, and further training courses.

Already, the business centre and nursery for enterprises specialised in health and biotechnology that has been set up by Cancer Campus (read Three questions for...) is full, with 16 enterprises, attracted by the opportunity to pool their resources, and to forge a skills network, and by the dynamism of the scientific and clinical environment.

Soon, they will be joined by a host of services: hotels and restaurants, sports facilities, public facilities, crèches, etc. It will be an attractive environment within which to work and to live, since a large supply of housing will also be part of the landscape. All this ideally served by public transport, with the future station of Villejuif – Gustave Roussy, for which the structural work will begin by mid-2016, with opening on the Paris Metro Line 15 being scheduled for 2022, before it becomes an interconnection station, connecting up to the extension of Metro Line 14, scheduled for 2024. The Institute will then be only 6 minutes from Orly Airport, 15 minutes from Châtelet (Central Paris) and 11 minutes from Gare de Lyon! Cancer Campus will thus be one of the major clusters of attractiveness of Greater Paris. ■



Agnès Girard,
Manager of the
department store
Printemps Nation

"Each cheque handed over to Odyssée makes us glad and proud, and rewards the energy and the heart put into making a success of the "Shopping Solidaire" action by Printemps Nation." The words of Agnès Girard give us a glimpse of the dynamism and altruism of this women who as been committed for seven years now to helping the fight against breast cancer.

It was through the Gustave Roussy Institute that she met Anne Bergougnoux, one of the founders of Odyssée, an association organising charity runs to raise money for the fight against breast cancer. "I had initiated a few projects for raising awareness of the disease, but Anne and her determination made me realise that I could go much further. And so, in 2008, the "Shopping Solidaire" action was born at Printemps Nation, with the support of my superiors and of my teams." The principle is to collect clothing from the store's brands, and to sell it, with the profits going to Odyssée. The association then pays over its profits to fund research at Gustave Roussy. Over the years, the event has mobilised a growing number of partners, and has generated 300,000 euros in six years.

Fired up by this increasing mobilisation, the manager has high ambitions for the 2015 edition, namely €100,000! Particularly since the other branches of Printemps have joined in with initiative, which is attracting increasing participation throughout the company. This, in any event, is what Agnès Girard dearly hopes to achieve and she "thanks again the people who have taught us a lesson for life and have been examples to us through their devotion. We, in our turn, are trying to pass on the torch." ■

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Contact: lalettre@gustaveroussy.fr

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CLINICIAN-RESEARCHERS THE LINK BETWEEN SCIENCE AND TREATMENT

Gustave Roussy is creating posts for researchers who are also practicing medical doctors, in order to reinforce its capacities for research tying in with clinical practice. The projects of these clinician-researchers will take part in developing new therapeutic approaches to cancer treatment

Giving doctors more time to do research. This is one of the major aims of Gustave Roussy and it has just been achieved with the creation of clinician-researchers posts. These specialists will spend nearly 80% of their time on research, while also remaining in contact with the patients.

"The new posts, rolled out at a rate of one per year over a period of five years, should serve to underpin setting up of lasting and labelled teams (Inserm, CNRS...). Candidates are being selected through a call for research projects that are innovative and already well advanced," explains Alexandre Bobard, the scientific coordinator at the Gustave Roussy Institute.

The two finalists of the first selection are thus doing research in epigenetics¹ and precision medicine, so as to propose increasingly customised treatment for the disease.

Who will be the lucky winner? We will know by mid-October. The only certitude is that "Gustave Roussy is aiming for scientific excellence. We will therefore only be choosing projects that are likely to bring concrete and fast progress in the fight against cancer!" ■

¹ The study of changes in the activities of genes that are related to external factors not involving any modification in the DNA sequence.

EVENT

"BEQUESTS AND DONATIONS: THE FUTURE NEEDS YOU"



"You cannot change the past, but you can change the future for cancer patients. Make a bequest."

Little known to the general public, and sometimes taboo, a bequest is actually an effective means of supporting and showing solidarity for the fight against cancer. To raise awareness of the importance of bequests and of the issues at stake, Gustave Roussy launched an initial media campaign on the subject last August: a 30-second television spot went out on the France Télévisions channels, as did a shorter Internet version and a radio message. The campaign thus reached citizens in order to mobilise them in supporting the innovative research work conducted by the Gustave Roussy Institute. ■

You can find the campaign messages on www.gustaveroussy.fr/campagne-legs



Further information on
www.gustaveroussy.fr