

Jubilee Workshop

20. International Leukemia Workshop / 625. Anniversary of Heidelberg University

Introduction to 40 years leukemia research as discussed at meetings in Wilsede and at symposia organized by the International Association for Comparative Leukemia Research

Biomedicine has experienced unprecedented discoveries and developments over the past 40 years. This jubilee workshop in connection with the 625 anniversary of Heidelberg University offers an appropriate frame to hold on for a moment and reflect what has been achieved since the 60s and 70s of the last century. A scientist's generation was present from the beginning on.

Leukemia research has been at the forefront of biomedical progress during this time and leukemia has served as a model for many diseases including infectious diseases and cancer at large. This research has led to amazing results which have improved the prognosis of many patients and have helped to increase survival and cure rates in the field of leukemia and other diseases, not to forget AIDS. During the last 40 years 5 important structures supported this progress

1. Progress with leukemia is inseparably connected with the symposia on Modern Trends in Human Leukemia in Wilsede, inaugurated and organized by Professor Rolf Neth from Hamburg, and with the symposia of the International Association for Comparative Research on Leukemia and Related Diseases (IACRLRD). These symposia have taken place in alternating years in Germany (Wilsede) and internationally worldwide (IACRLRD) for the past 40 – 50 years. They have attracted molecular biologists, hematologists, veterinarians and virologists from all over the world to present and discuss their cutting edge research in an informal atmosphere of curiosity, ambition, scientific strive and friendship. Discussions frequently were controversial and not without emotions. Yet, this did not prevent all participants to have a beer together at night or to have a midsummer night's walk through the Lüneburger Heide continuing discussions in a different surrounding. It was the atmosphere of these meetings which was highly promotional of new exciting results and progress, which makes the symposia unforgettable to a generation of scientists.

Wilsede is a tiny village in the middle of the Lüneburger Heide consisting of about ten houses and one barn (Abb.1)



Modern Trends in Human Leukemia
(Wilsede 1973)

It is an hour and a half away from the nearest airport and can be reached only by carriage or bicycle. The most important building in Wilsede is the barn since it serves as a meeting place, a lecture hall and a social centre of Wilsede all at once. There is electricity and running water, but, the heating may be a problem on rainy days. But, it is wonderful when it is sunny and dry.

2. The International Association for Comparative Leukemia Research originated from the observation that leukemia could be induced in many animal species by leukemia viruses, which were later designated retroviruses. The international community decided to join forces and founded the International Association with the help of the World Health Organization and the National Cancer Institute of the United States in 1961. Symposia were organized by a World committee every two years in different places worldwide alternating with the meetings in Wilsede (Abb.2).



XIX. IACLRD-Symposium
(Mannheim 1997)

The current Secretary General is Prof. Clara Bloomfield from Columbus, Ohio.

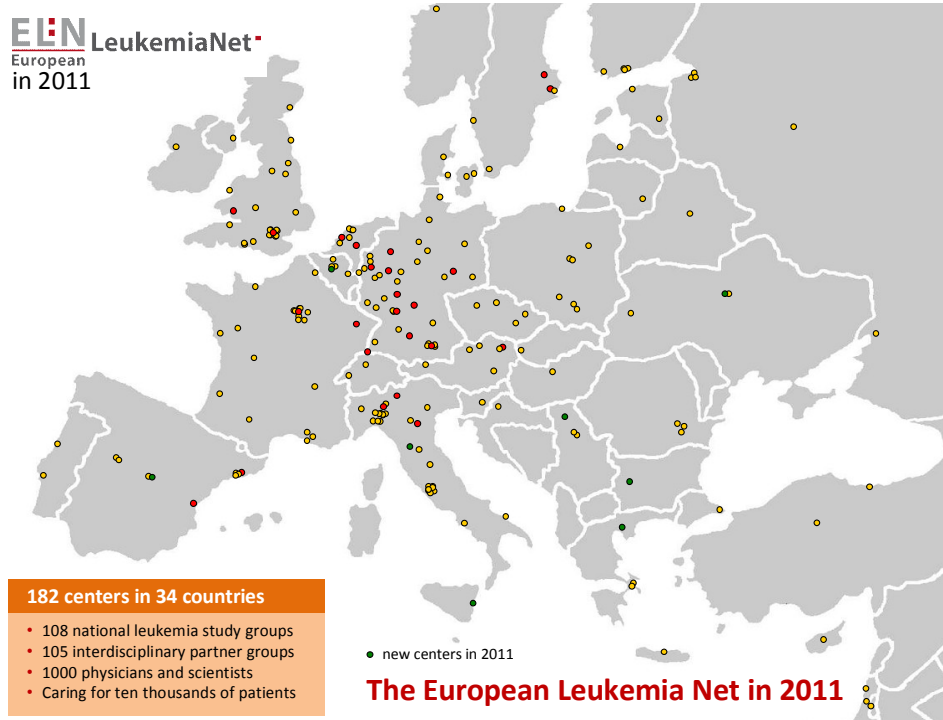
3. In the late 90s, Heidelberg University became host to the German Competence Network for Acute and Chronic Leukemias (Abb.3)



Steering Board of German Competence Network
(1999)

which was funded by the German Government,

4. and from 2002 onwards to the European LeukemiaNet, a network of excellence funded by the European Union comprising all major European leukemia study groups and their interdisciplinary partner groups (Abb.4).



5. The European LeukemiaNet became the partner of a private-public partnership with Novartis which complements the goals of the European LeukemiaNet of European leukemia registries, common standards for molecular monitoring and spread of excellence on leukemia Europe wide (Abb.5).

The EUTOS project 2007 – 2012
A public-private partnership of ELN and Novartis

- The EUTOS-score:
 - 2 variables (spleen-size and basophils)
 - 2 risk groups (high and intermediate)
- Leukemia registries
- Standardized molecular monitoring
- Spread of excellence

EUTOS for CML



European Treatment and Outcome Study

6. The German CML-Study Group was founded in 1982 and started the International Leukemia Workshops in Mannheim in 1992 (Abb.6)



International Leukemia Workshop
(Wachenburg 1992)

to provide background information and international perspectives to the members of the German CML-Study Group. The workshops followed the regular yearly meetings of the group end of June.

As a consequence we can celebrate in 2011 the 20th workshop together with the 625. anniversary of Heidelberg University.

Due to the special occasion we have extended our program by a section of more general interest (Part 2 of the workshop) to highlight basic discoveries and their clinical application over the past 4 decades by 5 examples. The reports, in essence, are from scientists and clinicians who were involved themselves in the discoveries and their clinical translations. All discoveries have been extensively discussed at the symposia in Wilsede or those organized by IACRLRD.

The 5 topics are:

1. Isolation and clinical application of granulocyte growth factor (colony stimulating factor, G-CSF);
2. Elucidation of the pathogenesis of chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) and clinical translation of this information into a causal therapy;
3. Identification and application of aneuploidy for the prediction of the prognosis of leukemia;
4. Detection and clinical application of minimal residual disease (MRD) for the therapy of malignant neoplasia;
5. Discovery of human retroviruses and their application to AIDS-vaccination and leukemia management.

The workshop ends with a special lecture on the meaning of the nuclear accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima, also given by an international leader in the field.

This special workshop tries to account for the incredible progress that has been made in biomedicine using leukemia research as one field of discovery and clinical translations and attempts to offer information on actual topics of modern medicine and also of every day life.

Gez.
Prof. Hehlmann