

## Press Release

Luxembourg, 25 September 2019

Invitation to the Media: Opening of the “NK 2019” on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, starting 5 p.m., at the Parc Hotel Alvisse, Luxembourg

### **Natural killer cells in the service of health**

*Luxembourg, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2019. From the 30<sup>th</sup> of September to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2019, 500 scientists from across the world will meet in Luxembourg to discuss new findings and methods for combatting diseases such as cancer or infections. The occasion is the “NK 2019”, the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Society for Natural Immunity. The scientific discussions will revolve around so called natural killer cells (NK cells). NK cells are special blood and tissue cells of the immune system. They are able to attack body cells that have become diseased following cancer or infections and eliminate them. Experts expect the latest research results on NK cells to present new possibilities for cures in the near future.*

**Media representatives are cordially invited to the opening of the conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2019, starting 5 p.m., at the Parc Hotel Alvisse, 120, Route d’Echternach, L-1453 Luxembourg.**

*Please register with [juliette.pertuy@lih.lu](mailto:juliette.pertuy@lih.lu). We will put you in touch with the interview partners. The event will be inaugurated by Dr. Jean-Claude Schmit, Directeur de la Santé, Prof. Ulf Nehrbass, CEO of the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH), Dr. Sean Sapcariu, Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), Prof. Adelheid Cerwenka, President of the « Society for Natural Immunity » and Dr. Tatiana Michel, LIH.*

Dr. Jacques Zimmer is a scientist at the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) and one of the organisers of the NK 2019: “We are delighted to see that the NK 2019 has attracted so many people to Luxembourg – even more than to previous NK meetings. This shows that Luxembourg is now highly visible worldwide for its research, for example for the exploration of the immune system.”

Another likely reason for the high popularity is that research in the field of NK cells is making rapid headway towards clinical applications. “Decades of intensive basic research on NK cells are now culminating in practical successes,” says Dr. Zimmer. “That makes the field of research especially exciting.”

The principle: medical professionals isolate for example NK cells from the blood of people suffering from cancer or from specific infections. In the laboratory, scientists then modify the surface of these cells with certain molecules. This gives the NK cells new, improved characteristics: they become more effective at attacking and destroying cancer cells or infected cells in the patient’s body.

Applications with modified NK cells are imminent, and clinical trials are already underway. Nevertheless, further basic research will have to be performed in future, as Dr. Tatiana Michel points out. Dr. Michel, like Jacques Zimmer, researches at LIH and is a co-organiser of the NK 2019. “We have put together a programme that also gives young researchers the opportunity to present their results and to gain new insights for their work on NK cells,” says Dr. Michel. “That is important for promoting the new generation of scientists and thus advancing the field of research.”

The other members of the local Organizing Committee are: Dr. Aurélie Poli, also from the LIH Department of Infection and Immunity; Ms. Juliette Pertuy, Communication Manager at LIH; Prof. Nathalie Jacobs from the GIGA Institute in Liège (Belgium); Prof. Markus Ollert, Director of the LIH Department of Infection and Immunity; and Dr. Bassam Janji, researcher at the LIH Department of Oncology; .

**Collaborations and funding:**

The event is organized in partnership with the Society for Natural Immunity, and supported by the FNR through its funding instrument "RESCOM - Scientific events".

It is also sponsored by Affimed, Innate Pharma, Glycostem, Miltenyi Biotec, Journal of Leukocyte Biology, Bio-technie, Cell Genix, Meso Scale Discovery (MSD), Cell Signalling, The European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS), Frontiers in Immunology and Vycellix™, Inc.

**Luxembourg Institute of Health: Research dedicated to life.**

The Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) is a public research organisation at the forefront of biomedical sciences. With its strong expertise in population health, oncology, infection and immunity as well as storage and handling of biological samples, its research activities are dedicated to people's health. At LIH, more than 300 individuals are working together, aiming at investigating disease mechanisms and developing new diagnostics, innovative therapies and effective tools to implement personalised medicine. The institution is the first supplier of public health information in Luxembourg, a strong cooperation partner in local and international projects and an attractive training place for ambitious early-stage researchers.

[www.lih.lu](http://www.lih.lu)

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