

Press Release

Luxembourg, Monday 4th May 2020

The Grand-Ducal couple behind the Luxembourg biomedical research's scene

On Monday 4th May 2020, the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) had the honor of welcoming Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg into the laboratories of the House of BioHealth in Esch-sur-Alzette in the presence of Mrs Anne Calteux, First Adviser to the Government, Mr Claude Meisch, Minister of Higher Education and Research, Léon Diederich, Advisor to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and Government Commissioner for LIH Board of Directors, Dr Gregor Baertz, President of LIH Board of Directors and Mr Xavier Poos, Deputy Director, Department of Health of the Ministry of Health and Vice-President the LIH Board of Directors; an opportunity for them to access the "behind the scenes" of Luxembourg research, at the heart of one of the biggest health fights in the world today.

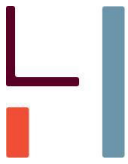
At the heart of the fight against COVID-19

During their visit, conducted while adhering to a strict safety protocol, the Grand-Ducal couple was able to meet LIH researchers tightly involved in the Research Luxembourg's Covid-19 Task Force which was set up at the start of the crisis in collaboration with experts of the Luxembourg public research sector * in order to stem the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prof Dr Ulf Nehrbass, CEO of LIH and spokesperson of the Task Force, also wished to salute the responsiveness and the team spirit that have enabled the national research ecosystem, the clinical community and the Luxembourg authorities to create a remarkable synergy from the start of the crisis.

T.R.H the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess also took the pulse of the main studies carried out within the framework of the Task Force including the "CON-VINCE" study, carried out by **Prof Dr Rejko Krüger**, Director of the Transversal Translational Medicine unit of the LIH, which aims to assess the dynamics of the spread of the COVID-19 disease within the Luxembourg population, or the "Predi-COVID" study conducted by **Dr Laetitia Huiart**, Director of the Department of Population Health at LIH. This study aims to identify the main risk factors and biological markers associated with complications encountered by certain patients infected with COVID-19, as well as the long-term consequences of the disease on the health of the population in Luxembourg. *"These studies will improve understanding of the disease and generate reliable data on its spread, helping decision makers to take action based on scientific evidence in the coming weeks"*, said **Prof Dr Nehrbass**.

These studies represent a concrete and direct contribution to patients, in line with the values and objectives of LIH. This was made possible thanks not only to the project leaders, but also thanks to all the teams involved "behind the scenes". *"An incredible collaboration was set up very spontaneously and in record time between all the stakeholders, most of them volunteers, coming from different LIH laboratories or from external organizations, demonstrating professionalism and unstoppable loyalty"* he concludes.



In other areas too, research continues!

“Although the COVID-19 crisis predominates in health news, it should not be forgotten that other burdens such as cancer, continue to rage in the shadow of the pandemic and we must continue our efforts in these areas too” underlines **Prof Dr Simone Niclou**, Director of the Department of Oncology at LIH.

T.R.H the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess continued their visit by meeting the research teams of the PFP project (for “Personalized Functional Profiling”), who continue their work in a manner adapted to the current context. This study aims at offering personalized anticancer treatments adapted to each patient and targets for the moment digestive system cancers and glioblastoma, a highly aggressive brain cancer in close collaboration with Robert Hospitals Schuman, the Luxembourg Hospital Center and the National Health Laboratory.

The Grand Ducal couple also had the opportunity to discover the work of **Prof Dirk Brenner**, Deputy Director of Research and Strategy of the Department of Infection & Immunity (DII) of LIH and to **Dr Johannes Meiser** PhD, Leader of Cancer Metabolism Group (FNR ATTRACT Fellow **) who investigate basic research aspects of tumor metabolism and the immune system.

The Grand-Ducal visit ended in the laboratories of the Department of Infection & Immunity (DII) directed by **Prof Dr Markus Ollert**, where the COVID-19 analyzes are currently taking place. The DII indeed has solid expertise in virology, immunology and serological testing and therefore plays a key role in the management of the pandemic in Luxembourg.

**LIH, LISER, LIST, LNS, University, FNR, under the coordination of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.*

***The ATTRACT program is intended for researchers not yet established in Luxembourg, who demonstrate the potential to become leaders in their field of research.*

About the Luxembourg Institute of Health: Research dedicated to life

The Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) is a public research organization 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 impact on people’s health. At LIH, devoted scientists investigate disease mechanisms to develop new diagnostics, innovative therapies and effective tools to implement personalized 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.

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