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Tumour biobank for advancing translational research in oncology

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Prevention, treatment and care of cancer patients largely depend upon improvements in scientific research. By creating a virtual inter-institutional tumour biobank, translational research will be promoted and a network created for future academic, medical and/or industrial collaborations.

Development and enhancement of cancer research networks was recommended in the Belgian National Cancer Plan, which was launched in 2008 by the Belgian Federal Ministry of Health. The objective is to create a virtual inter-institutional tumour biobank to promote translational research and to create a network for future academic, medical and/or industrial collaborations. The tumour biobank initiative at the Antwerp University Hospital (Universitair Ziekenhuis Antwerpen, UZA) (tumour biobank@UZA) will attempt to integrate into the multidisciplinary cancer care with linkage to medical and clinical data. The tumour biobank at the Department of Pathology, UZA, works according to standard procedures for sample processing and storage of fresh and paraffin-embedded tissue samples. The good collaboration and communication between the operating-room and the pathology department, and the use of international acknowledged guidelines enable the preservation of high-qualitative samples. Following preservation, 1% of the collected samples will be annually subjected to a quality control, which focuses on several parameters: sample identity, location, diagnosis, sample data, RNA integrity and concentration. Consent concerning the use of residual tissue for scientific purposes is obtained prior to surgery in accordance with the rules of the local ethics committee. The tumour biobank at the Department of Pathology, UZA, collaborates with surrounding hospitals for sample collection and contributes to the development of a virtual tumour biobank of the Belgian Cancer Registry.

Biography

Elke Smits earned her Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the Catholic University of Leuven, a Master of Science in Biotechnology and a PhD in Veterinary Sciences in 1998 from the University of Gent. She joined Devgen Inc, a spin-off company in Gent, as manager molecular cell biology for target discovery and drug development projects. In 2004, she became senior scientist at the Flemish Science Policy Council, the advisory body for the Flemish government concerning science and innovation policy. She has published over 20 peer-reviewed articles, holds several patents, wrote many policy advices and recommendations and authored the study serie Technology and Innovation in Flanders: Priorities. She currently heads the Science & Innovation department of the Antwerp University Hospital and has gained extensive experience in merging translational and clinical research within clinical practice. She holds a visiting professorship position at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Antwerp and is liaison officer CRC Antwerp for the Center for Medical Innovation.

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