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GRAP - Groupe de recherche sur l'alcool et les pharmacodépendances - ERI 23

Rapport Hcéres

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HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research
and Higher Education

Department of Research evaluation

report on research unit:

Research Group on Alcohol and
Pharmacodependences

GRAP

Under the supervision of
the following institutions
and research bodies:

Université de Picardie Jules Verne

Institut National de la Santé Et de la Recherche

Médicale - Inserm

Evaluation Campaign 2016-2017 (Group C)

HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research
and Higher Education

Department of Research Evaluation

In the name of HCERES,¹

Michel Cosnard, president

In the name of the experts committee,²

Rainer Spanagel, chairman of the committee

Under the decree N°2014-1365 dated 14 november 2014,

¹ The president of HCERES "countersigns the evaluation reports set up by the experts committees and signed by their chairman." (Article 8, paragraph 5)

² The evaluation reports "are signed by the chairman of the expert committee". (Article 11, paragraph 2)

Evaluation report

This report is the sole result of evaluation by the expert committee, the composition of which is specified below.

The assessments contained herein are the expression of an independent and collegial reviewing by the committee.

Unit name:	Research Group on Alcohol and Pharmacodependences
Unit acronym:	GRAP
Label requested:	UMR_S
Current number:	EA 4288 - ERI 24
Name of Director (2016-2017):	Mr Mickaël NAASSILA
Name of Project Leader (2018-2022):	Mr Mickaël NAASSILA

Expert committee members

Chair: Mr Rainer SPANAGEL, Central Institute for Mental Health, Mannheim, Germany

Experts: Ms Véronique DEROCHE-GAMONET, Université de Bordeaux (representative of Inserm)

Mr Jean-Louis GUILLOU, Université de Bordeaux (representative of CNU)

Mr Jean-Christophe HELBLING, Université de Bordeaux (representative of supporting personnel)

Mr Jose Antonio LOPEZ MORENO, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

Scientific delegate representing the HCERES:

Mr Jacques NOËL

Representative of supervising institutions and bodies:

Mr Mohammed BENLAHSEN, Université de Picardie Jules Verne

Ms Meriem MAROUF, Inserm

Head of Doctoral School:

Mr Laurent METZINGER, Doctoral School n° 585, “Sciences, Technologie, Santé”

1 • Introduction

History and geographical location of the unit

The unit GRAP was created in 2004 as a Junior Research Group (2004-2006) and was renewed as the ERI 24 (joint unit between the region and INSERM) from 2007 to 2009. Mr Mickaël NAASSILA progressively succeeded to Ms Martine DAOUST and obtained the renewal of GRAP as ERI 24 in 2012, with a substantial increase in clinical and preclinical staff. The lab moved in 2015 to a new lab building, Centre Universitaire de Recherche en Santé (CURS), located on the campus of the University of Picardie-Jules Verne.

Management team

The unit is directed by Mr Mickaël NAASSILA. It is co-directed by Mr Éric NGUYEN-KHAC since 2016.

HCERES nomenclature

Principal: SVE5 Physiologie, Physiopathologie, Cardiologie, Pharmacologie, Endocrinologie, Cancer, Technologies Médicales.

Secondaires: SVE2 Biologie cellulaire, Imagerie, Biologie Moléculaire, Biochimie, Génomique, Biologie Systémique, Développement, Biologie Structurale.

SVE4 Neurologie.

SVE6 Santé Publique, Épidémiologie, Recherche Clinique.

Scientific domains

The GRAP works on alcohol use and abuse and the resulting psychiatric, somatic and alcohol-related diseases.

Unit workforce

Unit workforce	Number on 30/06/2016	Number on 01/01/2018
N1: Permanent professors and similar positions	8	9
N2: Permanent researchers from Institutions and similar positions		
N3: Other permanent staff (technicians and administrative personnel)	5	5
N4: Other researchers (Postdoctoral students, visitors, etc.)	3	
N5: Emeritus		
N6: Other contractual staff (technicians and administrative personnel)		
N7: PhD students	8	
TOTAL N1 to N7	24	
Qualified research supervisors (HDR) or similar positions	9	

Unit record	From 01/01/2011 to 30/06/2016
PhD theses defended	5
Postdoctoral scientists having spent at least 12 months in the unit	7
Number of Research Supervisor Qualifications (HDR) obtained during the period	2

2 ● Assessment of the unit

Global assessment of the unit

Scientific interests of the unit over the last contract (2012-2016)

Research was dedicated to alcohol addiction and psychiatric comorbidities especially anxiety and schizophrenia. In addition, they have a very strong emphasis on somatic comorbidities with a focus on alcohol liver diseases (acute alcohol hepatitis).

Research was oriented toward: 1) determining the long-term impact of early life (*in utero*, adolescence) alcohol exposure on brain functioning, addiction vulnerability, and the aforementioned psychiatric comorbidities; 2) developing relevant animal models (for addictive behaviour, binge drinking, alcoholic liver disease); 3) studying acute alcohol-induced hepatitis; 4) participating in drug development up to clinical trials on new pharmacotherapies (for relapse prevention and acute alcohol hepatitis which has a very high mortality rate).

GRAP is usually geared towards a translational approach to link up preclinical and clinical findings, which resulted in gain of knowledge on pathophysiology and in the development of new pharmacotherapies. Their multidisciplinary approach includes successful interactions between physiologists, neuroscientists, psychologists, psychiatrists, hepatologists and clinical addiction researchers in a greatly organized team effort. This represents a necessary integrative and holistic approach for research on alcohol addiction. The scientific objective was and remains to improve knowledge of the pathophysiology alcohol-related diseases and the development of new pharmacotherapies (and other therapies such as deep brain stimulation).

Strengths

- ERI24 (GRAP) is the only unit in France working exclusively on alcohol use disorder and comorbidities. They do so in a translational way to merge preclinical and clinical findings. The team explores not only the psychiatric (addiction), but also the somatic (liver diseases) consequences of alcohol use and abuse. In the new contract, a new dimension is introduced with the study of the psychiatric comorbidities (anxiety and schizophrenia) of alcohol addiction;

- their research approach can be seen as a showcase for systems medicine studying several system levels in a holistic approach;

- the team has shown ability at leading national and european research consortia to obtain national and european, both public and private, research funding. Of particular importance for drug development is a strong link to pharmaceutical industry and biotech companies. In the field of research on alcohol addiction, this is now becoming a quite unique situation as in most european countries academia has in this particular field no more research contracts with the pharmaceutical world. The team has also a strong local financial and political support from the regional council, the Jules Verne University of Picardie, the general hospital (CHU) and the psychiatric hospital (Pinel hospital);

- the team has shown ability at translating its preclinical findings to clinical applications and prevention educative tools;

- the team has shown ability at influencing alcohol-related scientific and health policies regionally and nationally. The team is leader of regional and national networks on alcohol-related research (REUNIRA). It is also strongly involved in the regional alcohol prevention policy.

Weaknesses

Although two permanent engineers fulfil all requirements of full time researchers, there has been no official appointment for full time permanent researcher per se.