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BARITON - Bordeaux research in translational oncology

Rapport Hcéres

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HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research
and Higher Education

Research units

HCERES report on research unit:

Bordeaux Research in Translational Oncology

BaRITOn

Under the supervision of the following
institutions and research bodies:

Université de Bordeaux

Institut National de la Santé Et de la Recherche

Médicale – INSERM

HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research
and Higher Education

Research units

In the name of HCERES,¹

Didier HOUSSIN, president

In the name of the experts committee,²

Derek MANN, chairman of the committee

Under the decree No.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 result of the evaluation by the experts committee, the composition of which is specified below.

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

Unit name: Bordeaux Research in Translational Oncology

Unit acronym: BaRITOn

Label requested: UMR-S

Present no.: UMR_S1053

Name of Director
(2014-2015): Mr Jean ROSENBAUM

Name of Project Leader
(2016-2020): Mr Jean ROSENBAUM

Expert committee members

Chair: Mr Derek MANN, Newcastle University, UK

Experts: Ms Elizabeth MACINTYRE, INEM, Université Paris Descartes

Mr Michel SANSOM, Inserm, Université de Rennes 1 (representative of
CSS Inserm)

Mr Michel SIMONET, Université de Lille (CNU representative)

Scientific delegate representing the HCERES:

Ms Maryam MEHRPOUR

Representatives of the unit's supervising institutions and bodies:

Mr Pierre DOS SANTOS, Université de Bordeaux

Mr Yannick LUNG, Université de Bordeaux

Mr. Roger MARTHAN (director of the Doctoral School SVS n°154)

Ms Anne ROCHAT, Inserm

1 • Introduction

History and geographical location of the unit

The Bordeaux Research in Translational Oncology (BaRITOn) results from a large restructuration of 3 pre-existing labs: Inserm U 1053 "Pathophysiology of Liver Cancer", Inserm U 853 "Helicobacter infection, Inflammation and Cancer" and EA 2406 "Histology and Molecular Pathology of Tumors". These three teams are located in adjacent buildings on the Carreire site of University of Bordeaux.

Management team

The Bariton is headed by Mr Jean ROSENBAUM supported by the deputy director Mr Jean-Philippe MERLIO.

HCERES nomenclature

Principal: SVE1_LS1 Biologie moléculaire et structurale, biochimie

Secondary: SVE1_LS2 Génétique, génomique, bioinformatique

Unit workforce

Unit workforce	Number as at 30/06/2014	Number as at 01/01/2016
N1: Permanent professors and similar positions	25 (24.8)	21 (20.8)
N2: Permanent researchers from Institutions and similar positions	4	3
N3: Other permanent staff (without research duties)	11 (10.5)	9 (8.5)
N4: Other professors (Emeritus Professor, on-contract Professor, etc.)	4	4
N5: Other researchers (Emeritus Research Director, Postdoctoral students, visitors, etc.)	10	6
N6: Other contractual staff (without research duties)	7	4
TOTAL N1 to N6	61 (60.3)	47 (46.3)

Unit workforce	Number as at 30/06/2014	Number as at 01/01/2016
Doctoral students	11	
Theses defended	14	
Postdoctoral students having spent at least 12 months in the unit	6	
Number of Research Supervisor Qualifications (HDR) taken	4	
Qualified research supervisors (with an HDR) or similar positions	25	22

2 • Overall assessment of the unit

Global assessment of the unit

The research unit, Bordeaux Research in Translational Oncology (BaRITOn) is a conglomeration of three research teams carrying out important bench-to-bedside research which tackles oncogenic processes in the liver, gastrointestinal tract and the skin. In combination the three teams have strong scientific background, important complementary skills enabling basic, translational and clinical investigations and the potential for delivering research that can bring about change in the clinical management of oncology. The unit has a strong director (Mr Jean ROSENBAUM) and three clearly defined research teams each headed by investigators who have a high quality track record of publications and good visibility in their respective fields. The teams consist:

- team 1 - Liver Carcinogenesis and Tumour Invasion, led by Ms Violaine MOREAU and focussed mainly on basic research into the molecular mechanisms of hepatocellular carcinoma, additionally the team is involved in translational research;

- team 2 - Helicobacter infection, inflammation and cancer are to be led by Mr Philippe LEHOURS and are focussed on translational research utilising *in vivo* models to understand inflammatory processes associated with *H. pylori* infections and how this pathogen promotes gastric cancers, additional research addresses the cytopathic mechanisms of *H. pylori*, vaccine development and a role in the progression of Alzheimer's disease;

- team 3 - Cutaneous lymphoma oncogenesis, led by Mr Jean-Philippe MERLIO is focussed on important clinical research on primary cutaneous lymphoma including the identification of cytogenetic markers and the role of telomere lesions.

Strengths and opportunities in relation to the context

BaRITOn has an excellent internationally renowned director and very strong team management who bring together skills and resources from basic research and clinical investigations that have the potential to make considerable impact on the translation of cancer biology to new diagnostics and therapeutics. The unit has a strong publication record (370 articles since 2009) and regularly publishes in the top papers in their respective fields of research. A particular strength is the continued recruitment of new investigators (4 recent academic recruits) which ensures new skills and avenues of research are brought to the unit. Established members of the unit have national and international visibility at expert groups and influential committees as well as having strong participation in scientific meetings. The three research teams are located in adjacent laboratories which ensures their strategic goal for close interaction and sharing of resources can be achieved. Funding for research is good in all three teams. Access to clinical material and *in vivo* experimental models are considerable strengths.

Weaknesses and threats related to the context

While BaRITOn members have a strong publication track record they do not currently publish in the highest impact journals (unless as contributory middle authors), this may reflect an apparent inability to attract high quality postdoctoral researchers from overseas and that not all of the teams have full-time scientists. Furthermore, the three full-time scientists of BaRITOn belong only to team 1. While not essential, lack of top-tier publications will impact on reputation and international visibility as well as ability of the unit to win major external grant funding. The latter is a concern when considering that cancer is a highly competitive field both in the basic and clinical arenas. A further identified weakness is that at present there is not strong evidence for joint projects between the three teams which would help with developing unit cohesion and overall strategic direction.

Recommendations

There is a need for closer integration of the three teams, for this purpose the director may consider strategic use of future PhD studentships and contributions from individual grants to fund joint projects.