

SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

I am particularly proud to present the accomplishments of the Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori (INT) in 2010. On the one hand, the strategic research programs we were able to fund thanks to the so-called 5% have already delivered significant intermediate results, which are detailed in this report, while on the other hand many of the long-term institutional projects and plans started in the past were brought to a satisfying conclusion during the year.



First of all, we completed the move of the Experimental Departments to the new premises at the Amadeo Lab on time and with remarkably little disruption of everyday research activities. Thanks to careful planning and to the relentless efforts of all the staff involved, our researchers have been able to avail themselves fully of these new state-of-the-art laboratories without major interruptions in their normal activity, which included the design of new scientific projects and applications to all the main funding opportunities.

The Amadeo Lab has been fully operating since February 2010 and, since then, it has also hosted numerous scientific seminars and meetings, among which was the workshop "Multidimensional Tumour Characterization", which was held in June. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the results achieved and solutions to the shortcomings identified in the first two years since the launch of the Integrated Oncology Program (PIO) chaired by INT. All the participants, and in particular the External Units who took part in the event, expressed their appreciation for the high scientific standard of the meeting.

Towards the end of 2010, the Amadeo Lab saw the official inauguration of the Biobanca, a tissue bank initially dedicated to colon tumour samples. This initiative, supported by Regione Lombardia and

Fondazione Cariplo, as well as the development of a Lombardy virtual tissue bank by ROL, are signs of the deep interest of our Institute in the development of biobanking as a strategic link between clinical and research activities. In the context of this commitment, in 2010 this Scientific Directorate supported the publication of an outstanding document promoted by our Ethics Committee: From the Biobank to the Research Biorepository: Ethical and Legal Recommendations, representing an important step forward in the practical and theoretical clarification of the complex legal and ethical issues associated with biobanking and a benchmark for future discussions.

Another initiative that has bore fruits in 2010 is the setting up and activation of the Technology Transfer Office. After a period devoted to a precise update of the existing patent portfolio, this office was finally able to start looking towards the future: not only were a number of new patents submitted, but they were also successfully presented to the investors during important initiatives in the sector, such as BioItaly. In addition, a crucial collaboration was established with Alintec-Technoscouting, a project (supported by the Regione Lombardia, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Craft Trade and Agriculture of Milan, Innovehub and Unioncamere Lombardy) aimed at publicising research results and promoting innovative regional projects with high technological content. Finally, our TTO is also involved in the CERIM, an EC-funded project aimed at improving techno-transfer models in the Central Europe region.

The biennial project ROL 2 by the Lombardy Oncology Network (ROL) was completed during 2010. ROL is by now a well-integrated player within the Lombardy oncology community. One of the main results was the development of guidelines for diagnosis, therapy and follow-up for all solid tumours, which are already being used for epidemiologic data analysis on a regional level and the assessment of the appropriateness of the services provided.


The contribution of our Institute as the implementing body and coordinator of ROL activities also led to a new collaboration with Nerviano Medical Sciences (NMS) that resulted in the issuing of ROL/REL 2010 grants. Many Lombardy health structures applied and 15 clinical trials are currently being launched. Moreover, three promising pre-clinical studies have also been selected in order to capitalize on the synergy between INT and NMS, making the best use of the scientific and clinical expertise of our Institute and the experience accumulated by NMS in molecular biology and its infrastructure dedicated to the development of new oncology compounds.

International collaboration is more and more essential to the advancement of science and the improvement of standard of care. Almost every Unit at INT is involved in international research projects, and since last year the Institute itself – together with all the best cancer institutes in Europe – has been part of an extensive European project, the EurocanPlatform, both as a partner and as the leader in the Working Group devoted to research in the field of early diagnosis and biomarkers. As my presidency of the European Organisation of Cancer Institutes (OECI) coincided with a growth both in the number of members and in the range of initiatives of this organization, our Institute has also become a partner in the ambitious Worldwide Innovative Networking consortium, WIN. Besides organising a yearly scientific meeting that gathers speakers and an audience from all over the world, in 2010 WIN began to be actively involved in funding clinical trials at an international level.

Finally, as I do every year, I would like to comment on one of the possible impact indicators for the scientific output of our Institute. In 2010, our publications achieved an IF of 2,274.62, a result that slightly improves on the 2009 numbers and confirms the overall excellence of our scientific productivity by number of contributions as well as by quality and renown of the scientific journals where several of them have been published.

Acknowledgments

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PUBLICATIONS

