



## Media release

Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) celebrates its 50-year jubilee

### Working for 50 years to ensure the best-possible cancer therapy

**The Swiss network for clinical cancer research celebrates its 50-year jubilee in 2015. The Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) is a non-profit organization aimed at improving the chances of a cure for patients with cancer. In this jubilee year, the campaign for cancer research is joined by ambassadors from the worlds of sport, politics, culture and medicine - including downhill skier Wendy Holdener, National Councillor Ruedi Lustenberger and star chef Ivo Adam.**

*Bern, 21 January 2015* – For 50 years, the Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) has been committed to research on new cancer therapies and the further development of existing treatments. The SAKK was founded in 1965 as the Swiss Chemotherapy Group and today is the national cancer research network, whose members include all university hospitals and also many cantonal and regional hospitals throughout Switzerland. Patients at these centres get the best possible treatment according to the current state of the art, even if this treatment is not yet available for routine therapy. The SAKK includes around 1000 patients in clinical trials every year and has a budget of 15 million francs. Since 1965, 25,000 patients have been treated in SAKK trials. “50 years after the SAKK was founded, our primary objective remains the best possible cancer therapy for patients” says SAKK President Beat Thürlimann.

Cancer research in the past decades has succeeded in improving the prognosis for many patients. Today there are effective treatments available for numerous types of cancer, and survival rates are increasing. “The improvement in treatment is only possible with patient-based clinical research. The SAKK has been playing its part in cancer medicine for Swiss patients for 50 years”, says Beat Thürlimann. “Thanks also to the SAKK, Switzerland today has the best treatment record in cancer therapy throughout Europe.” But every year more than 35,000 people in Switzerland are still diagnosed with cancer, and more than 15,000 die of the disease. As Franco Cavalli, cancer specialist and scientific director of the Oncology Institute in Italian-speaking Switzerland, points out: “We know more and more about cancer and can offer increasingly better treatment for it. But there will always be cancer and, with the steady increase in life expectancy, the cases of cancer in Switzerland are likely to increase in future. So cancer research is more necessary than ever.”

The diagnostic aids available today allow tumours to be classified ever more precisely and cancer treatments to be ever better tailored to individual patients. The focus of clinical trials today, therefore, is on personalized treatments rather than broad-spectrum therapies. But clinical trials for such targeted treatments involve a substantial investment and can only be successfully carried out as collaborative projects in research networks such as the SAKK.

In its research on cancer, the SAKK is supported in its jubilee year by ambassadors from the worlds of sport, politics, culture and medicine. One of these ambassadors is downhill skier Wendy Holdener: “Cancer can affect anyone, which makes associations and foundations like

the SAKK all the more important". Star chef Ivo Adam is also only too aware that, while a healthy diet can help in the prevention of cancer, it unfortunately does not offer a cure. "This is why I support the SAKK, because it tries to improve treatments and gain new insights through clinical studies." And National Councillor Ruedi Lustenberger underlines why clinical research with and for patients is important: "Science and research must meet the challenge to come up with knowledge for practical use. Clinical cancer research does precisely this and helps future patients to benefit from new findings."

#### **SAKK Ambassadors in Jubilee Year**

**Ursula Abgottspon**, partner of former Council of States member This Jenny  
(† 15.11.2014)

**Ivo Adam**, star chef and managing director

**Dr. med. Sandro Anchisi**, Head of the Department of Internal Medicine and Geriatrics  
CHVR Hôpital du Valais (RSV)

**Prof. Dr. med. Markus Borner**, Head of Oncology/Haematology Hospital Centre Biel

**Corsin Camichel**, former ice hockey player

**Prof. Dr. med. Franco Cavalli**, cancer specialist and scientific director of the Oncology Institute of Italian-speaking Switzerland

**Prof. Dr. med. Thomas Cerny**, President of Swiss Cancer Research (KFS)

**Tyla Durden**, pop artist/singer

**GUSTAV**, singer

**Wendy Holdener**, downhill skier

**Laszlo I. Kish**, actor, director and communication trainer

**Stefan Kobel**, former beach volleyball player

**Sanna Lüdi**, freestyle skier

**Ruedi Lustenberger**, National Councillor, President of the National Council in 2014

**Jaël Malli**, singer

**Gabriela Manetsch**, head of research team Cantonal Hospital Graubünden

**Dr. Klazien W. Matter-Walstra**, Network Outcomes Research, SAKK Coordinating Center,  
Bern / European Center of Pharmaceutical Medicine ECPM, University Basel

**Prof. Dr. med. Jakob Passweg**, President Swiss Cancer League (KLS)

**Dr. med. Stefanie Pederiva**, Senior Consultant Oncology, Cantonal Hospital Baden

**Prof. Dr. med. Bernhard Pestalozzi**, Senior Consultant University Hospital Zurich

**Prof. Dr. med. Christoph Renner**, Doctor at the Oncocentre Hirslanden & Zurich, President Swiss Tumour Institute (STI)

**Prof. Dr. Christoph Rochlitz**, Head of Oncology, University Hospital Basel

**Ted Scapa**, cartoonist

**Kevin Schläpfer**, ice hockey coach EHC Biel

**Nino Schurter**, mountain bike world champion

**Mathias Seger**, ice hockey player ZSC Lions, captain of national ice hockey team

**Christian Stucki**, wrestler



**Contact:**

- Dr. Peter Brauchli, SAKK Director, SAKK Coordinating Center, Bern, Tel. 031 389 92 96, peter.brauchli@sakk.ch
- Prof. Beat Thürlimann, SAKK President, Head of Chest Centre Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen, Tel. 071 494 18 88, beat.thuerlimann@sakk.ch, can be reached as from 26 January 2015
- Sonja Bill, Jubilee Project Manager, SAKK Coordinating Center, Bern, Tel. 031 389 94 82, sonja.bill@sakk.ch

*The **Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK)** is a non-profit organization, which has been conducting clinical trials in oncology since 1965. Its primary objective is to research new cancer therapies, to develop existing treatments further and to improve the chances of a cure for patients with cancer. This takes place through cooperative projects within Switzerland and in collaboration with centres and study groups abroad. The SAKK is supported by a service-level agreement with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and also by partners such as the Swiss Cancer League and Swiss Cancer Research. For more information, go to [www.sakk.ch](http://www.sakk.ch)*