



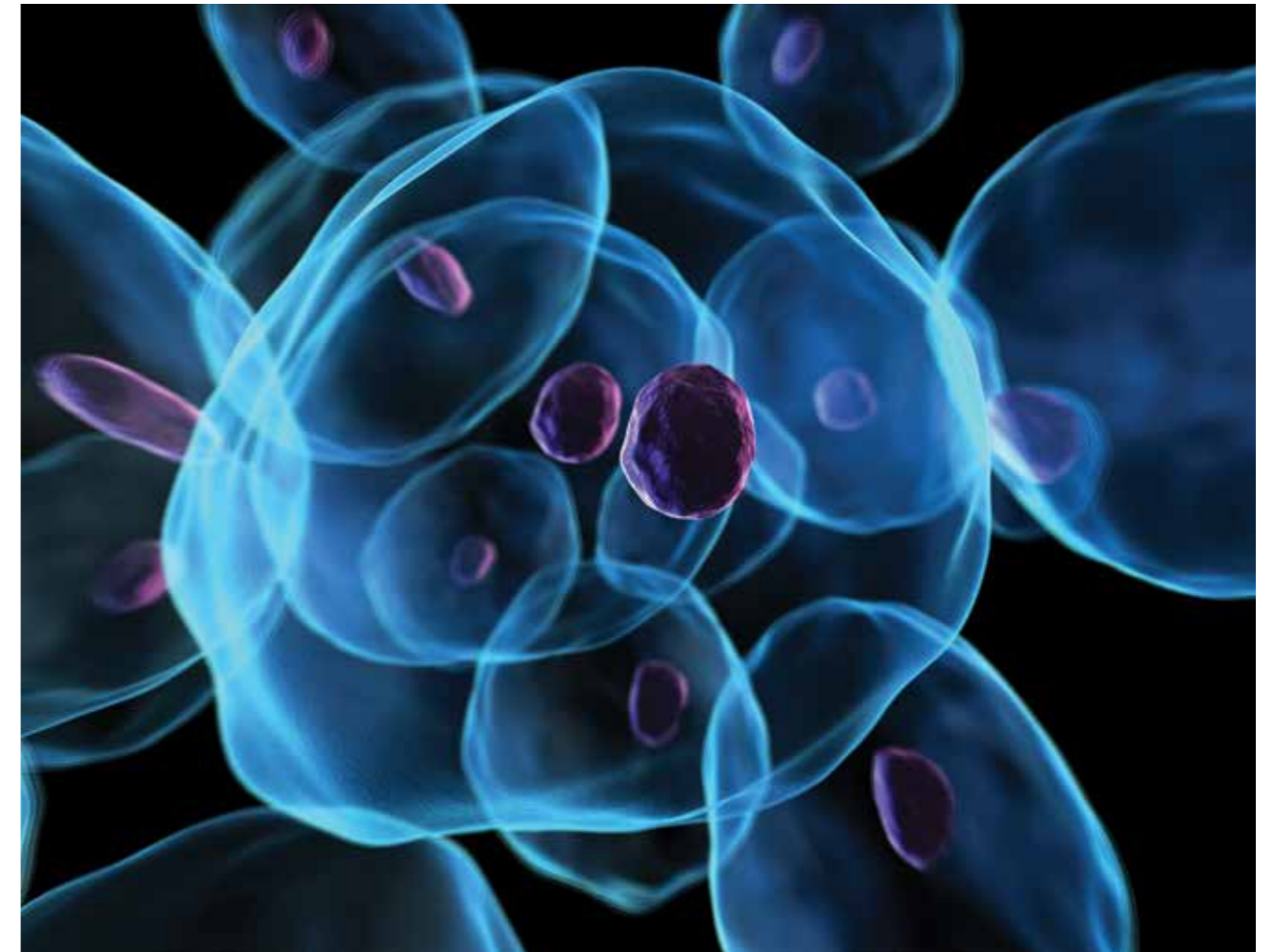
**The European
Association for Cancer
Research**

www.eacr.org

 Scientia



The European Association for Cancer Research, or EACR, was established in 1968 by a team of scientists who wanted to enable communication among cancer researchers across Europe. Today, the EACR coordinates scientific meetings and high quality training courses, and facilitates communication and collaboration amongst its membership community of nearly 10,000 members from 87 countries. The organisation continues to raise the profile of cancer research in Europe and addresses the need for sustained political and economic support. Here, we have had the pleasure of speaking to **Professor Richard Marais**, President of the EACR, who tells us all about the EACR's role in the advancement of cancer research in Europe and beyond.



Firstly, could you please give us a brief introduction to the EACR, and tell us a little about its history, aims and objectives?

The EACR was established in 1968 – we are looking forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary in 2018! We now have almost 10,000 members around the world, ranging from first year PhD students to Nobel Prize winners. Our objective is simple: to advance cancer research for the public benefit, from basic research to prevention, treatment and care. We aim to achieve that by delivering top-quality scientific meetings and conferences available to our members at reduced rates, and by providing our members with opportunities to apply for bursaries, travel fellowships and sponsorship for their own meetings.

How does the EACR actively facilitate communication and collaboration between cancer researchers from different institutions and different countries?

All of our members receive a fortnightly email bulletin, providing news of our meetings and networking opportunities. Through our extremely highly rated Conference Series, we offer our members the chance to hear from, and meet in person, some of the top speakers in their field of expertise. These meetings are kept deliberately small and intimate. Our next meeting is Goodbye Flat Biology in Berlin from 02-05 October 2016. Our fortnightly bulletin also contains job updates, details of funding opportunities and a summary of forthcoming conferences from other organisations.

In July 2016 we have our Biennial Congress – EACR24 – this year held in my home city of Manchester, UK, from 09–12 July 2016. Our Congress is a fantastic opportunity for our members to come together, learn from each other, and take their experience back to their home institutions.

In what other ways does the EACR help to advance cancer research, and what funding does the EACR provide?

We are proud of our Travel Fellowship Programme, which has been providing opportunities for early-career scientists to advance their research since 1976. Now co-sponsored by Worldwide Cancer Research, the Programme supports the development of researchers through visits to centres of excellence or participation in specialised practical workshops and courses. This valuable opportunity is exclusively available to early-career EACR members. We have supported researchers from 37 countries with over half a million euros of funding.

We also have a generous bursary programme to enable researchers to apply for travel funding and a free registration at our conferences. For example, we were delighted to award funding to enable more than 40 researchers to attend EACR24 in Manchester.

What are the greatest challenges that currently shape Europe's cancer research agenda?

We recently carried out a survey of our members, and asked them this very question! We can therefore tell you with some authority that by



far and away the biggest challenge our researchers face is the shortage of funding and the constant need to search and apply for grants. The short-term nature of many grants also makes it difficult for researchers to take on ambitious research projects and is almost certainly affecting the quality of the research that is being conducted. It is also having a big impact on people's careers, because it makes it difficult to formulate long-term plans.

(In the same survey, we were delighted to learn that 98% of respondents would recommend EACR membership to others!)

The EACR head office is based in the UK – if the UK votes to leave the EU in June of this year, will this negatively affect the EACR's activities?

Cancer knows no boundaries and our members work together without regard to nationality. Although our headquarters are in the UK, we operate throughout Europe and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Our aim and our determination is to support our members in achieving our mission.

Does the EACR collaborate with other cancer research organisations such as ECCO and Cancer Research UK, and if so, in what way?

Collaboration is a way of life for us and our members. We continue to work with ECCO on European oncopolicy and have recently entered into an exciting new partnership with ESMO; the European Society of Medical Oncologists. There is a natural link between our associations

and we are keen to work together to enable even greater cooperation and exchange of ideas between basic and translational researchers and their clinical colleagues. To that end, we will partner with ESMO in their 2017 Congress to be held in Madrid and again at their Congress in 2019. We are delighted that, coupled with our own Congresses in 2016 and 2018, this gives our members the opportunity to attend a major cancer conference each year.

In terms of partnerships with cancer charities, we have a strong relationship with Worldwide Cancer Research and are very grateful for the support we receive from them for our Travel Fellowships each year.

Please tell us a little about the EACR's position on public engagement and knowledge dissemination?

Last year, the EACR joined with the EORTC and ESMO on the CAREFOR project – the Clinical Academic Cancer Research Forum. CAREFOR's purpose is to communicate the role and benefits of independent clinical research, as well as bringing about improvements in the clinical trials landscape. Further developments will be announced as the project progresses.

We are always keen to tell the public about the ground-breaking work carried out by our researchers; this is something we will focus on in our next strategic plan.

Finally, can you please share your thoughts on the future of cancer research in Europe, and the ongoing role of the EACR in that future?

If we think back over the life of the EACR, cancer research has made enormous strides in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer. The advances are currently occurring at breath-taking pace, so we are in no doubt that the advances over the next 50 years will be equally enormous. EACR will continue to support these developments by playing a key role in bringing people together so that they can share research outcomes, develop collaborations and continue to work together to advance improvements in cancer patient care.



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