Press release

Prof Michel Mittelbronn is awarded an FNR PEARL Chair

Luxembourg to strengthen its research activities in neuro-oncology and neurodegenerative diseases

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Beginning of January 2017, renowned neuropathologist Professor Dr. Michel Mittelbronn joined the Laboratoire national de santé (LNS) in a joint appointment with the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) and the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine (LCSB) of the University of Luxembourg. Endowed with a 2.6 million euro FNR PEARL Chair, Professor. Michel Mittelbronn will set up for the first time a diagnostic neuropathology unit at the LNS and build a research team together with LIH and LCSB to strengthen the research activities in neuro-oncology (at LIH) and neurodegenerative diseases (at LCSB).

Based on the research activities of the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) and the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine (LCSB), and the current strategic development of the Laboratoire national de santé (LNS), a clear need for a specialist in neuro-pathology in Luxembourg was identified. Indeed, until now, neuropathology diagnostics were not covered by the LNS and despite a strong, internationally recognized research expertise in the ‘Neuro’ field at both the LIH and LCSB, clinical neuropathology was missing from the agenda. For these reasons of national and strategic needs within the biomedical sector in Luxembourg, the institutions proposed to launch a joint initiative for the recruitment of an FNR PEARL Chair in neuropathology back in 2016. The PEARL programme, funded by Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), provides competitive funding to attract top researchers in strategic research areas for Luxembourg.

Professor Michel Mittelbronn’s curriculum perfectly fits the requirements for this joint position, in which he will bridge clinical diagnostics and research activities, and foster the ties between the country’s major actors in biomedical research. Until December 2016, Professor Mittelbronn headed the diagnostic neuropathology at the Neurological Institute of the Goethe University Frankfurt/Main, the oldest brain research institute in Germany and among the largest neuropathological institutes in Europe. His arrival will allow the LNS morphological and molecular pathology department to provide services in the field of neuropathology, thus avoiding the transfer of specific analyses to foreign laboratories and shortening the result delays to clinicians and patients.

Professor Mittelbronn is delighted by his assignment in Luxembourg: “I am very much looking forward to the upcoming tasks of establishing the Luxembourg Centre of Neuropathology, which aims to build a network medical care, research and teaching between LNS, LCSB and LIH. The aim of this centre is primarily to link the research-oriented neurosciences, which are excellently oriented established in Luxembourg, with tissue-based clinical-oriented research.
In the next few months, a new neuropathological department structure will be established for the first time in the Luxembourg Centre of Neuropathology, which will be used to analyse microscopic, protein-based and molecular pathological studies of tissue samples and autopsies. I am very eager to meet my new colleagues in Luxembourg and discover the country”.

“Professor Michel Mittelbronn’s appointment will be instrumental in taking Luxembourg’s research in neuropathology to the next level. The creation of the Luxembourg Centre of Neuropathology represents a great opportunity to address both neuro-oncology and neurodegeneration research projects, which activities will be facilitated by the close proximity of the IBBL in 2017”, says Dr. Catherine Larue, CEO ad interim of the Luxembourg Institute of Health.

“Examining brain tissue is vital to understand the changes that occur in the brain and increase our knowledge of neurodegenerative disease,” says Prof Rudi Balling, Director of the LCSB. “Professor Mittelbronn’s expertise will hence form a cornerstone in LCSB’s aim to better diagnose and define subgroups of Parkinson’s disease within the National Centre for Excellence in Research on Parkinson’s Disease (NCER-PD).”

“I am very glad that Professor Mittelbronn accepted to take over the challenge of setting up the Luxembourg Centre of Neuropathology. The FNR is committed to support this endeavour, which will be of utmost importance, not only for research in the biomedical area, but also for the benefit of public health in Luxembourg”, explains Dr Marc Schiltz, Secretary General of the Luxembourg National Research Fund.

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