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**Press release**

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**Flagship project: Med Uni Graz supports cardiovascular research  
EUR 775,000 and a research professorship in the fight against the number one cause of  
death**

Graz, 7 July 2022: Working together to explore an urgent medical problem and find completely new methods for treating it—that is the goal of the physicians and basic researchers working on the first flagship project at Med Uni Graz. The emphasis of this new Med Uni Graz research initiative is on interdisciplinary research of clinicians and basic researchers and is unique within Austria.

**Put to the test: The agony of choice faced by international experts**

Twelve consortia from a wide range of medical fields participated in a highly competitive selection procedure. Following a review by international experts, four consortia made it to the last stage of the selection procedure, and on Monday they presented their research ideas in front of a well-known international jury at Med Uni Graz. The jury consisted of members of the Med Uni Graz Scientific Advisory Board—including Prof. Heiko von der Leyen and acclaimed Oxford researcher Gero Miesenböck—as well as other recognized experts. The selection jury was enthusiastic about the research initiative and the projects that were submitted, and it was difficult to choose from among the four finalists.

**Research in the fight against the leading causes of death worldwide**

The dynamic winning consortium has been announced: **VascHealth** investigates new types of mechanisms, such as disturbed recycling of cellular debris, misdirected communication between cells and organs or specific inflammatory processes to develop prevention and treatment options. "The cardiovascular system is our 'lifeline' in the true sense of the word—it supplies organs and body cells with essential oxygen and nutrients. A healthy vascular system is a prerequisite for healthy aging," explains cardiologist Peter Rainer, the speaker for the interdisciplinary consortium of physicians and basic researchers. If our vascular system becomes diseased, the consequence is heart attack, stroke, heart failure or kidney failure—the most frequent causes of death in Austria and around the world. In addition to individual suffering and loss of healthy years of life, vascular disease causes enormous social and economic damage.

**Cardiovascular disease: Prevention and therapy as the goal of research**

True to the Med Uni Graz motto "pioneering minds," the university is supporting the **VascHealth** flagship project with a research professorship and EUR 775,000 over the next five years. "For researchers, the path to the flagship project is very ambitious, and I am all the more thrilled by the great interest and the diverse research projects that have been submitted," says Caroline Schober, Vice Rector of Research and International Affairs at Med



Uni Graz, who is pleased with this great commitment. The research findings should develop new ideas for prevention and treatment and help to expand the international visibility of research on circulation and metabolism in Graz. Caroline Schober also hopes the initiative will show how great the need for financial support and the potential for research collaboration between the clinic and the basic lab are in Austria at present. The international jury is convinced that it is "a more than worthwhile investment in our future."

## **VascHealth: Successful research thanks to interdisciplinarity**

The interdisciplinary **VascHealth** team is composed of cardiologist Peter Rainer, nephrologist Kathrin Eller, hematologist Andreas Reinisch, basic researchers Dagmar Kratky (consortium co-speaker) and Simon Sedej as well as other excellent junior researchers and cooperation partners.

### **More information**

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