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Press release
for immediate release

Med Uni Graz and Boehringer Ingelheim Open New Christian Doppler Research Laboratory Research for New Therapies Against Lung Cancer

- New Christian Doppler Lab to advance next-generation NSCLC therapies
- Seven-year research program targets immunogenic cell death in lung cancer
- Joint initiative accelerates translation from fundamental biology to patient benefit

Graz and Vienna, Austria, March 17, 2026: Despite major advances in personalized medicine, lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide and continues to pose a major medical challenge. Against this backdrop and in light of the urgent need for innovative therapeutic approaches, the Medical University of Graz and Boehringer Ingelheim today announced the opening of a new Christian Doppler Laboratory dedicated to developing novel therapies for lung cancer.
The seven-year research program focuses on non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and explores innovative ways to trigger so-called immunogenic cell death - a mechanism that helps the immune system recognize and specifically attack tumor cells.

Investing in Next-Generation Therapies for Lung Cancer

In non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), the most common form of lung cancer, modern targeted therapies and immunotherapies often provide only temporary benefits. Relapses are common and significantly reduce long-term survival prospects.
To develop new and more effective treatment strategies for NSCLC, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET), together with industry partner Boehringer Ingelheim, is funding a new Christian Doppler Laboratory at the Medical University of Graz. The laboratory will be led by Michael Dengler and Philipp Jost.

Federal Minister Wolfgang Hattmannsdorfer: “This Christian Doppler Laboratory is a prime example of how successful innovation policy works: when science and industry collaborate closely, innovation, value creation, and high-quality jobs emerge. Austria is among Europe’s leaders in key technologies such as life sciences and biopharma. Through our industrial strategy, we are strengthening these future-oriented sectors, promoting strategic partnerships between research institutions and companies, and creating the framework conditions to ensure that medical innovations are developed in Austria and translated into economic value here.”

“Through our partnership with Boehringer Ingelheim, we are strengthening our ability to translate new scientific insights into transformative therapeutic approaches for patients,” said Andrea Kurz, Rector of the Medical University of Graz.

“This Christian Doppler Laboratory provides an outstanding framework to connect basic research with clinical application and to accelerate innovation where it is needed most.”

“This partnership brings together complementary strengths: the scientific excellence and clinical integration of Med Uni Graz and our expertise in the discovery and development of new cancer therapies. Together, we aim to accelerate the development of treatments that have the potential to sustainably change the course of the disease,” said Mark Paul Petronczki, Head of Oncology Research at Boehringer Ingelheim.

Making Lung Cancer visible to the Immune System

Cells in the human body have a natural “self-destruct program.” When they are damaged or no longer needed, they die in a controlled manner. This process is essential for maintaining the body’s health. In some cases—known as immunogenic cell death—this process can also alert the immune system: dying cells send signals that draw immune cells’ attention to potential threats. This specific form of programmed cell death is the focus of the new Christian Doppler Laboratory.

“In non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), these mechanisms are often switched off. As a result, the tumor can grow undetected by the immune system,” explains oncologist Philipp Jost. “The aim of our research is therefore to influence cancer cells in such a way that they can be more easily recognized and attacked by the immune system. If successful, existing cancer therapies could become significantly more effective,” adds molecular biologist Michael Dengler.

However, developing new therapies in a targeted way requires a precise understanding of the internal processes within cancer cells. This is exactly where the scientists at the Christian Doppler Laboratory at the Medical University of Graz focus their work. “We investigate the biological mechanisms that determine how and when lung cancer cells die,” the two laboratory heads summarize. In the long term, these insights could help improve survival rates and quality of life for patients while also enabling more efficient use of modern cancer therapies within healthcare systems.

Science and Industry united for Innovative Cancer Therapies

As part of the Christian Doppler Research Association, the new laboratory follows a proven model that combines academic excellence with industrial innovation.
The laboratory is located on the campus of the Medical University of Graz in Medical Science City Graz and benefits from modern infrastructure, interdisciplinary expertise, and access to clinically relevant samples from the Biobank Graz.

Boehringer Ingelheim coordinates its global oncology research from Austria. The company’s Regional Center Vienna is a key site for cancer biology, computational innovation, and translational research. Collaborations such as the new Christian Doppler Laboratory, as well as the long-standing partnership with CBmed in Graz, strengthen Austria’s life sciences ecosystem and accelerate the development of next-generation cancer treatments.
The laboratory will be funded for seven years with a total of €3.2 million. The funding is provided in equal parts by Boehringer Ingelheim and public funding bodies.

About the Medical University of Graz

More than 2,500 employees in research and administration, as well as around 5,800 students, work, teach, and study at the Medical University of Graz with a shared commitment to advancing innovative medicine for the health and well-being of patients.

As a center of modern top-level medicine in southern Austria, Med Uni Graz offers an attractive environment for work and study and plays a key role in regional healthcare. Oncology is one of its central research priorities.
https://www.medunigraz.at

About Boehringer Ingelheim RCV

Boehringer Ingelheim is a biopharmaceutical company active in the fields of human medicine and animal health. As one of the largest investors in research and development, the company focuses on the development of innovative therapies in areas of high unmet medical need. The Boehringer Ingelheim Regional Center Vienna (RCV) manages the business with human and animal health products in 33 countries from Vienna. In addition, clinical research in the entire region is coordinated from Vienna. Vienna is also a central location for cancer research as well as for biopharmaceutical research and production. 4,940 employees are employed in the region, 3,451 of them in Austria.

About the Christian Doppler Research Society

In Christian Doppler Laboratories, application-oriented basic research is pursued at a high level, and expert scientists cooperate with innovative companies. The Christian Doppler Research Association is an international best practice example for promoting this collaboration. Christian Doppler Laboratories are financed jointly by the public purse and the participating companies. The most important public sponsor is the Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET).