



agence d'évaluation de la recherche
et de l'enseignement supérieur

Section des Unités de recherche

AERES report on the canceropole

Canceropole PACA

From the

Institut du Cancer

February 2011



agence d'évaluation de la recherche
et de l'enseignement supérieur

Section des Unités de recherche

AERES report on the canceropole

Canceropole PACA

From the

Institut du Cancer

Le Président
de l'AERES

Jean-François Dhainaut

Section des unités
de recherche

Le Directeur

Pierre Glorieux

February 2011



Canceropole

Name of the research unit: Cancéropole PACA

Name of the director: M. Christian CHABBANON

Members of the review committee

Committee chairman :

M. Yong-Jie LU, Barts Cancer Institute, Queen Mary University of London, Great Britain

Other committee members :

M. Paolo DELLABONA, San Raffaele Scientific Institute, Milan, Italy

M. François FUKS, Laboratoire d'Epigénétique du Cancer, Bruxelles, Belgique

M. Darius RAZAVI, Faculté Sciences Psychologiques et de l'Education, Bruxelles, Belgique

Observers

AERES scientific advisor :

M. Nicolas GLAICHENHAUS

INCa representatives :

M. Fabien CALVO

Ms. Véronique ATGER



Report

1 • Introduction

- **History and geographical localization of the canceropole, and brief presentation of its field and scientific activities**

Canceropole PACA covers a relatively small area, only one region-Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur, located at the south-east corner of France next to Italia and open to the Mediterranean Sea. The population in this region is mainly located in two cities Marseille and Nice, where all the regional cancer research is carried out. This canceropole was established in 2003. It has constructed a managing team to lead, coordinate and unify the medical, scientific and industrial communities for regional cancer research. However, legal status of canceropole PACA has not been established until recently. Many regional, national and international meetings have been organized. Collaboration between basic scientists, clinicians and industrial forces has been well initiated. The number of research teams included in the canceropole has been significantly increased in the last 7 years (53-177). The cancer research activity is organized under 6 axes: clinical research, descriptive genomics, functional genomics, host-tumor relations, immunotherapies and therapeutic targeting, epidemiology and social sciences and finally technological research. Collaborations between the axes are achieved.

- **Management team**

The legal status of canceropole PACA has been established recently, the latest one of the 7 canceropoles. Before this, the canceropole was managed under a steering committee including representatives of institutions, directors of scientific affairs (6 domains) and members of the coordination office. Finances were managed through Institute Paoli-Calmette. In the future the canceropole will comprise 7 founding members with well-structured governance and management teams. Decisions on research and other activities will be made under a board of directors, a scientific advisory board and a executive committee and executive director.

2 • Overall appreciation on the Canceropole

- **Summary**

This canceropole covers a relatively small area with a good density in cancer research activity. It has the second largest fund among the canceropoles. Many works have been done in network regional researchers, building up/enhance research platforms and training. This canceropole showed effective communication effort and established very good website based information sharing. It provides good supports for inter-canceropole and international collaboration and helps in EU FW7 program application. However, the number of EU programs participated by the canceropole teams is limited. Tissue bank network is well established. Tissue collection rate and quality control are good. The axes, which currently each focused on one research area, have potential to limit the interdisciplinary collaboration. They need to be reorganized. However, as cross axis collaboration has been encouraged, good trans-discipline collaborative programs have been performed. As a consequence, the researches were presented as coordinated programs rather than following the axes during the site visit. The input/output ration for the research is very good. Research strength has been established in a few tumor types and they are planning to expand to a few more cancers. The assessment panel suggested them to focus on their strength.



- **Strengths**

- Good management resulting in a good organization, collaborations between teams, and long-term strategy allowing flexibility;
- Good intra and extra communication policy (web site, documents, meetings...);
- Complementarities between the Nice and the Marseille area;
- Good connection between the preclinical and clinical translation;
- Despite the small number of biotech and pharma companies in the area, collaboration with industrial forces were established.

- **Opportunities**

- The merging of the Aix-Marseille universities;
- Enhanced management and relationship with other organisations by establishing the legal status of Canceropole PACA;
- The creation of two cancer centres;
- Using regional bioinformatic establishment to enhance canceropole bioinformatic team;
- Intercanceropole collaboration for national programme.

- **Weaknesses and threats**

- The definition of the different axis is not optimal;
- The merging of the Aix-Marseille universities;
- Decision of the INSERM not to be a member of Canceropole PACA;
- Website not in English;
- Industrial funding who's renewal is uncertain;
- Unwillingness of research teams to play supporting (opposite to leading) role in a collaborative programme.

- **Recommendations to the head of the Canceropole**

- Implement more pragmatic axis;
- Increase collaborations with other Canceropoles, especially given the rather small size of this Canceropole;
- Define a specific number of cancers to focus on;
- For specific projects (i.e. OMICS), it should be clarified who is going to do what;
- Enhance the bioinformatics team but not new equipments for OMICS studies;
- To use the already existing local bioinformatics resources to implement the OMICS programs.



3 • Specific comments

- **Contribution of the Canceropole to the structuration of the research at the local level**

Appreciation on the initiatives aiming at a better use of biological resources (existence of a data base for biological resources, number of samples, quality control...): Good online catalogue of tissues ; The number of samples has increased significantly in the past years ; Good quality control.

Appreciation on the quality of the partnership between the Canceropole and the scientific and industrial clusters: Very good. Although the number of industrial companies in this region is limited, good collaboration was established. The canceropole also pay attention to help the set up of spin-out companies, which is not commonly done by other canceropoles.

Appreciation on the quality of the partnership between the Canceropole and the local funded agencies (conseil général, conseil régional, universités): Good. However, more work to be done with INSERM.

- **Appreciation on the strategy, management and life of the Canceropole**

Relevance of the Canceropole's organization, quality of the management: Very good.

Relevance of the Canceropole's communication policy: Excellent. Press relation is mentioned in this canceropole but not others. Suggested to help with press release for teams where institution press release team is not available.

Relevance of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation: Excellent.

- **Appreciation on the project**

Relevance of the project according the INCa priority 1 (structuration of the research at the local level): Good. As mentioned above, more interdisciplinary collaboration may be further enhanced by reorganising the axes.

Relevance of the project according the INCa priority 2 (différences et facteurs de risque): Many programmes/projects were designed to address this issue.

Relevance of the project according the INCa priority 3 (valorisation): This canceropole has significant added value to regional cancer research.

Relevance of the project according the INCa priority 4 (europe): Good effort in collaboration with other european countries and supporting the application of EU FW7 programme. However, more work to do for canceropole teams to participate in programmes coordinated by other regions or countries. Currently the number of the EU FW7 programme participated by Canceropole PACA is few.

- **Appreciation on the quality of SWOT analysis**

It is generally good. In the strength, current national/international leading research field should be listed and focused for future investment. Small geographical area is also strength for network, communication and sharing facilities. 'Position with respect of other concentrations of talent in biology in the region, e.g. Infectiopole' shouldn't be considered as a threat. Instead, it should be considered as an opportunity to collaborate with for cutting edge cancer research.



4 • Appreciation theme by theme

- **Title of the theme: 1. Clinical Research**
- **Name of the theme leader: M. Jose SANTINI and M. Patrice VIENS in the past, and M. Jean-Marc FERRERO and M. Olivier CHINOT in the future**

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2007: 33.

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2010: 50.

- **Appreciation on the results**

Appreciation on the quality of the 3 most important discoveries identified by the Canceropole (originality, quality of publications,..): The originality of the projects is ok but the 3 most important discoveries were not specifically presented, which was the same as the other canceropole did. Publications are good, but not outstanding.

Appreciation on the number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa and on the evolution of these numbers with time: The number of INCa funded projects for individual axis is not clear. The overall number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa is good, second to Canceropole IDF. The overall number of projects that have been submitted to INCa was increasing annually except 2010. However, the success rate for funding was reduced significantly after 2007.

- **Relevance and impact of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation and at the emergence of cutting edge projects**

Appreciation on the number and the quality of the seminars and conferences: Good.

Existence of fruitful collaborations between Canceropole teams that have resulted in co-authored publications: Collaboration is good but information of co-authored publications is not clear.

Appreciation on ability of the participants to the theme to interact fruitfully with scientists from other field : Excellent as brilliant cross discipline and theme collaborative projects have been set up.

Appreciation on the ability of the involved teams to participate to Cancer-related european calls and programs: see comments regarding INCA priority 4 (Europe).

- **Conclusion:**

- Summary

The research work in this theme progressed well. Previous work was mainly focused on clinical trials with limited collaboration. The future plan requires more extensive collaborations and trans-discipline interaction.

- Strengths and opportunities

CTD regional; excellence on certain cancer types including breast cancer, haematology, ENT and giomas; collaboration between axes.



- Weaknesses and threats

Lack of the visibility of the work of CRA institutes ; the organisation of clinical research remains insufficient ; difficult for translational research based on the theme definition.

- Recommendations

Change the theme name into clinical and translational research.

- **Title of the theme: 2. Descriptive genomics**
- **Name of the theme leader: M. Dominique FIGARELLA-BRANGER and M. Daniel BRINBAUM**

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2007: 21.

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2010: 39.

- **Appreciation on the results**

Appreciation on the quality of the 3 most important discoveries identified by the Cancerpole (originality, quality of publications,..) : The originality of the projects is ok but the 3 most important discoveries were not specifically presented, which was the same as the other cancerpole did. Publications are good, but not outstanding.

Appreciation on the number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa and on the evolution of these numbers with time: The number of INCA funded projects for individual axis is not clear. The overall number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa is good, second to Cancerpole IDF. The overall number of projects that have been submitted to INCa was increasing annually except 2010. However, the success rate for funding was reduced significantly after 2007.

- **Relevance and impact of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation and at the emergence of cutting edge projects**

Appreciation on the number and the quality of the seminars and conferences: Good

Existence of fruitful collaborations between Cancerpole teams that have resulted in co-authored publications: Good collaboration but information of co-authored publications is not available.

Appreciation on ability of the participants to the theme to interact fruitfully with scientists from other field : Excellent as brilliant cross discipline and theme collaborative projects have been set up.

Appreciation on the ability of the involved teams to participate to Cancer-related european calls and programs: see comments regarding INCA priority 4 (Europe).

- **Conclusion:**

- Summary:

The research work in this theme progressed well with reasonable collaborations.

- Strengths and opportunities:

Good biobanks and tumour collections; strong clinicalian and biologist involvement; efficient platforms; good ties with biotechs participating to ICGC.



– Weaknesses and threats :

Lack of EC projects ; lack of established international leadership in genomics ; high competition in genomics study and internationalisation of genomic studies.

– Recommendations :

Enhance the bioinformatics team and access national and international genomics platforms.

- **Title of the theme: Axis 3. Functional Genomics**
- **Name of the theme leader: Ms Anne-Odile HUEBER and M. Jean-Paul BORG in the past, and Ms Ellen VAN-OBBERGHEN-SCHILLING and M. Jean-Paul BORG in the future**

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2007: 45.

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2010: 90.

- **Appreciation on the results**

Appreciation on the quality of the 3 most important discoveries identified by the Canceropole (originality, quality of publications,..) : The originality of the projects is good but the 3 most important discoveries were not specifically presented, which was the same as the other canceropole did. Publications from this axis are very good and the strongest in this canceropole.

Appreciation on the number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa and on the evolution of these numbers with time: The number of INCa funded projects for individual axis is not clear. The overall number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa is good, second to Canceropole IDF. The overall number of projects that have been submitted to INCa was increasing annually except 2010. However, the success rate for funding was reduced significantly after 2007.

- **Relevance and impact of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation and at the emergence of cutting edge projects**

Appreciation on the number and the quality of the seminars and conferences: Good.

Existence of fruitful collaborations between Canceropole teams that have resulted in co-authored publications: Good collaboration but information of co-authored publications is not available.

Appreciation on ability of the participants to the theme to interact fruitfully with scientists from other field : Excellent as brilliant cross discipline and theme collaborative projects have been set up.

Appreciation on the ability of the involved teams to participate to Cancer-related european calls and programs: see comments regarding INCA priority 4 (Europe).

- **Conclusion:**

– Summary:

The research work in this theme progressed well with very good publications both for quantity and quality.

– Strengths and opportunities:

High number of excellent research teams in this axis with a number of top journal publications; a number of biotech companies have been established in this region.

– Weaknesses and threats :

Limited number of EU projects ; high international competition in this theme.



– Recommendations :

Focus on the strength to established/enhance the national and international leadership.

- **Title of the theme: 4. Host-tumour relation, immunotherapies and therapeutic targeting**
- **Name of the theme leader: M. Alain BERNARD and M. Daniel OLIVE**

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2007: 25.

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2010: 29.

- **Appreciation on the results**

Appreciation on the quality of the 3 most important discoveries identified by the Canceropole (originality, quality of publications,..) : The originality of the projects is good but the 3 most important discoveries were not specifically presented, which was the same as the other canceropole did. Publications are very good.

Appreciation on the number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa and on the evolution of these numbers with time: The number of INCA funded projects for individual axis is not clear. The overall number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa is good, second to Canceropole IDF. The overall number of projects that have been submitted to INCa was increasing annually except 2010. However, the success rate for funding was reduced significantly after 2007.

- **Relevance and impact of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation and at the emergence of cutting edge projects**

Appreciation on the number and the quality of the seminars and conferences: Good.

Existence of fruitful collaborations between Canceropole teams that have resulted in co-authored publications: Good collaboration but information of co-authored publications is not available.

Appreciation on ability of the participants to the theme to interact fruitfully with scientists from other field : Excellent as brilliant cross discipline and theme collaborative projects have been set up.

Appreciation on the ability of the involved teams to participate to Cancer-related european calls and programs: see comments regarding INCA priority 4 (Europe).

- **Conclusion:**

– Summary:

The research work in this theme progressed well with good collaborations.

– Strengths and opportunities:

Regional strength in immunological therapy and outstanding teams in relevant field; good collaboration.

– Weaknesses and threats :

Collaboration with genomic and bioinformatic teams should be enhanced ; more focus of research field required.

– Recommendations :

Based on strength, programmes should be more focused to establish/enhance national/international leadership.



- Title of the theme: 5. Epidemiology and social sciences in oncology
- Name of the theme leader: M. Pascal AUQUIER and Ms Yolande OBADIA

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2007: 21.

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2010: 24.

- **Appreciation on the results**

Appreciation on the quality of the 3 most important discoveries identified by the Canceropole (originality, quality of publications,..) : The originality of the projects is good but the 3 most important discoveries were not specifically presented, which was the same as the other canceropole did. Publications are good.

Concrete results of the research activity and socio-economic partnerships: good.

Appreciation on the number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa and on the evolution of these numbers with time: The number of INCa funded projects for individual axis is not clear. The overall number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa is good, second to Canceropole IDF. The overall number of projects that have been submitted to INCa was increasing annually except 2010. However, the success rate for funding was reduced significantly after 2007.

- **Relevance and impact of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation and at the emergence of cutting edge projects**

Appreciation on the number and the quality of the seminars and conferences: Good.

Existence of fruitful collaborations between Canceropole teams that have resulted in co-authored publications: Good cross axis and intercanceropole collaborations but information of co-authored publications is not available.

Appreciation on ability of the participants to the theme to interact fruitfully with scientists from other field : Excellent cross discipline collaboration.

Appreciation on the ability of the involved teams to participate to Cancer-related european calls and programs: Not clear.

- **Conclusion:**

— Summary:

Many projects have been initiated in this theme with reasonable publications.

— Strengths and opportunities:

National and international leadership in certain research area.

— Weaknesses and threats :

Lack of focus and limited time devoted to governrship in this axis.

— Recommendations :

Programs either with leadership or as participator should be at the national level.



- Title of the theme: 6. Research in technology
- Name of the theme leader: M. Jean-Pierre GERARD and M. Olivier MUNDLER

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2007: 21.

Number of teams involved in this theme in 2010: 23.

- **Appreciation on the results**

Appreciation on the quality of the 3 most important discoveries identified by the Canceropole (originality, quality of publications,...) : The originality of the projects is ok but the 3 most important discoveries were not specifically presented, which was the same as the other canceropole did. Publications are good, but not outstanding.

Appreciation on the number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa and on the evolution of these numbers with time: The number of INCA funded projects for individual axis is not clear. The overall number of projects that have been submitted and funded by INCa is good, second to Canceropole IDF. The overall number of projects that have been submitted to INCa was increasing annually except 2010. However, the success rate for funding was reduced significantly after 2007.

- **Relevance and impact of the initiatives aiming at the scientific animation and at the emergence of cutting edge projects**

Appreciation on the number and the quality of the seminars and conferences: Good.

Existence of fruitful collaborations between Canceropole teams that have resulted in co-authored publications: Information of co-authored publications is not available.

Appreciation on ability of the participants to the theme to interact fruitfully with scientists from other field : Not clear.

Appreciation on the ability of the involved teams to participate to Cancer-related european calls and programs: Weak.

- **Conclusion**

- Summary

This axis only focus on radiotherapy and imaging with a very incorrect theme title. The research work in this theme progressed reasonable well.

- Strengths and opportunities

One of the best equipped region for radiotherapy platform in France.

- Weaknesses and threats

Not a good label regarding to the name of the axis.

- Recommendations

Change axis title and focus on national/international leading areas.

Institut National du Cancer
Monsieur Fabien Calvo
52, avenue André Morizet
92513 Boulogne Billancourt Cedex

Marseille, le 30 mars 2011

Objet : Rapport d'évaluation de l'AERES

Monsieur le Directeur de la Recherche de l'Institut National du Cancer,

Nous avons bien reçu le rapport d'évaluation de l'AERES concernant le Cancéropôle PACA, ainsi que vos recommandations aux coordonnateurs de cancéropôles suite à cette évaluation.

Les éléments d'information de ce rapport et de ce document ont été revus au sein de l'équipe de coordination et par les membres du Comité de Pilotage réunis le 30 mars 2011. Les responsables des institutions fondatrices du Cancéropôle PACA ont été destinataires de l'ensemble de ces éléments d'information.

Les remarques et recommandations des experts de l'AERES n'appellent pas de remarque contradictoire de notre part, pas davantage que vos recommandations. Nous allons intégrer ces suggestions dans un plan d'action destiné à optimiser la gouvernance du Cancéropôle PACA, à renforcer la coordination des ressources biologiques et technologiques par la concentration des moyens et des expertises plus que par leur dispersion, et à faire évoluer le contenu et le travail scientifique de nos axes pour concentrer nos actions sur des pathologies prioritaires, et pour mieux valoriser les actions transversales; nous aurons l'occasion de vous présenter prochainement ce plan d'action, lorsque l'opportunité nous sera donnée de vous rencontrer.

Le Cancéropôle PACA remercie les experts, et l'ensemble des personnels de l'AERES et de l'INCa ayant contribué à son évaluation.

Je vous prie de croire, Monsieur Le Directeur de la Recherche, en l'expression de nos salutations distinguées.

Pr Christian CHABANNON,
Coordonnateur scientifique



C. CHABANNON

Clara DUCORD,
Chargée de mission coordination des équipes

