Ulm: New Research Centres for Diseases of the Nervous System

Federal Minister Schavan inaugurates new DZNE and University of Ulm institutes

Ulm, January 11th, 2013. Federal Research Minister Annette Schavan opened two new neuroscience institutes today in Ulm. They are supported by the Federal Government as well as by the Land of Baden-Württemberg, and will expand the current research activities of the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE) and the University of Ulm. The new centres are intended to develop diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and will assist in incorporating new scientific findings into clinical practice as quickly as possible. They focus on two diseases of the nervous system for which there are no known cures at present: Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and Frontotemporal dementia (FTD).
"The University of Ulm and the DZNE are both leading institutions in the field of ALS and FTD research on the international stage," says Federal Minister Schavan. "In order to give patients a perspective, we need to ensure that results obtained in the laboratory are put into practice more rapidly." Experts from universities and university clinics therefore need to cooperate with non-university institutions such as the DZNE. Schavan adds: "We highly appreciate the fact that institutions of the Federal Government and the Land of Baden-Württemberg are joining forces for a common goal concerning research on ALS and FTD. Furthermore, I am delighted that the University of Ulm has been able to obtain financial support for its own ALS research centre. This will enhance the University’s internationally leading role in the area of clinical ALS research."
Nationwide and internationally

The newly-opened centres include the Helmholtz Virtual Institute “RNA dysmetabolism in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and Frontotemporal Dementia” and the “ALS Research Center”. They are independent of one another, but will be cooperating together closely.

The virtual institute is actually a research partnership under the auspices of the Helmholtz Association. This partnership includes institutions in Germany as well as in Sweden and France. Partners are the DZNE with its sites in Dresden, Munich and Tübingen, the University of Ulm as well as the universities of Umeå and Strasbourg. The result is a unique network that stretches throughout Europe and connects fundamental research and clinical research. The goal of the virtual institute is to incorporate scientific discoveries on ALS and FTD as quickly as possible into clinical treatments.

Additionally, the “ALS Research Centre” has officially opened in Ulm. This institute will focus specifically on the research of Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. It was jointly established and financed by the Medical Faculty at the University of Ulm, the Charcot Foundation and the Land of Baden-Württemberg.

Background
Virtual Institute: The Helmholtz Virtual Institute “RNA dysmetabolism in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and Frontotemporal Dementia” is supported by the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres. Approximately two-thirds of the Helmholtz Association budget is provided by public funding. The DZNE Dresden site is responsible for the coordination of the virtual institute and Prof. Gerd Kempermann is the speaker.

The institute has a total budget of approximately EUR 900,000 per year. A third of the budget is provided by its partners, and the remaining two-thirds are financed by the Initiative and Networking Fund of the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres. The initial funding phase is set for a term of five years.

In 2007 the Helmholtz Association established so-called “virtual institutes”. These provide a framework for collaborations between Helmholtz Centres, universities and other research institutions, both nationally and internationally. For more information, please visit: www.helmholtz.de/en/helmholtz_centres_networks/helmholtz_virtual_institutes

Contacts:
Prof. Dr. Gerd Kempermann
Speaker of the Helmholtz Virtual Institute “RNA-dysmetabolism in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and Frontotemporal Dementia”
Speaker
German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases,
Dresden
+49 351/458-82201
gerd.kempermann(at)dzne.de

Prof. Dr. Albert C. Ludolph
Director of the neurological department of Ulm University
Director of “ALS Research Centre” and Deputy Speaker of the Helmholtz Virtual Institute
+49 731/177-1200
albert.ludolph(at)rku.de

Dr. Dirk Förger
Head of Press and Public Relations
German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases
+49 228/43302-260
+49 173/5471350
dirk.foerger(at)dzne.de

Willi Baur
Head of Press and Public Relations
University of Ulm
+49 731/50-22020
willi.baur(at)uni-ulm.de