

## Knowledge and technology transfer as a social responsibility

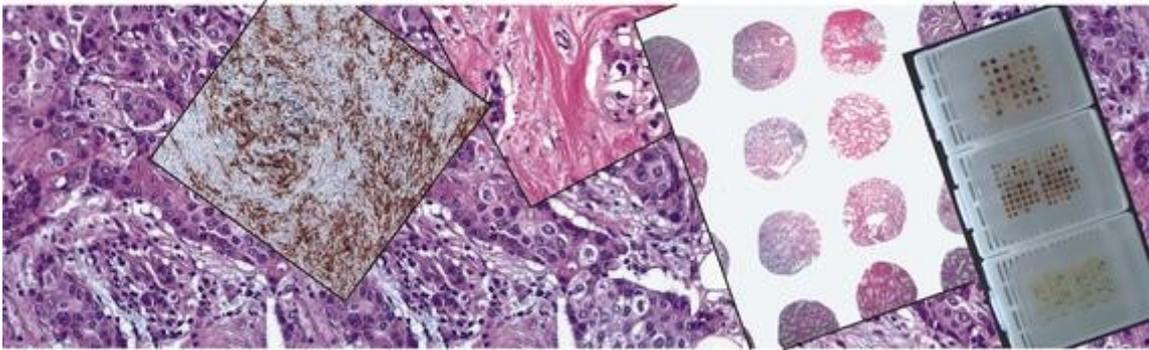
**Technology transfer that efficiently exploits the intellectual property created by publicly funded research is necessary in order to turn scientific discoveries into successful innovations that improve people's quality of life and boost the economy. The efforts made to rapidly transfer research results from the laboratory into clinical application for the benefit of patients leads to new strategic partnerships and structures in the field of translational medicine.**



Translational research aims for the rapid transfer „from bench to bedside“.

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Research leads to new findings and insights. This does not necessarily generate a measurable benefit, and in any case, this is not always the ultimate goal. However, even those who advocate pure science acknowledge that many successful innovations have emerged from basic research that is exclusively driven by curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Politics and society would be heading in the wrong direction if they decided to stop promoting these drivers of human progress. However, research activities at public research institutions are expected to be of material (or immaterial, but recognisable) benefit for society. New insights or inventions have a long way to go before they become innovations; they can only be considered to be innovations when a technological or organisational novelty has successfully entered the market or is used by society. Purpose-oriented applied research is normally expected to generate a larger number of innovations than pure basic research, although success cannot be either foreseen or planned. This is why applied research activities also receive support from public funds; basic research, in particular in biomedicine, is seen as research that deals with the elementary constituents and processes that do not directly lead to applications, but on whose results applied research is based.



Biobanks such as the tissue bank of the National Center for Tumor Diseases Heidelberg are very important for translational research

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In order to facilitate and speed up the transfer of scientific findings into innovative products and services, almost all universities and research centres have set up technology transfer offices that provide services at the interface between science and industry. The technology transfer offices' major task is to identify, protect and exploit the intellectual property generated at the respective universities and research institutions. The technology transfer offices focus on the economic exploitation of intellectual property, and any profit is returned to the parent organisation and reinvested in research.

Over the last few years, the term translational research has become very fashionable. It means different things to different people. The term is often used in health research where it refers to the close connection between basic and clinical research. Translational medicine refers to the investigation of the causes of disease in the laboratory as well as clinical investigations aimed at obtaining a greater understanding of the mechanisms that lead to certain diseases and eventually the translation of research results as quickly as possible into new or improved patient treatment. The transfer of laboratory research into bedside application may well be associated with the aim of making money as is the case with technology transfer, but this is not the major driver.

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) campaigns strongly on behalf of translational medicine and has launched strategic programmes aimed at supporting and funding rapid knowledge transfer "from bench to bedside". In addition to national translational research centres such as the National Consortium for Translational Cancer Research, local translation centres such as the Centre for Translational Immunology in Tübingen run in cooperation with the university hospitals have been established, creating new infrastructure platforms that accelerate the transfer of knowledge gained in basic research into clinical application. In addition, the BMBF's motto for the year of science 2011 is "Research for Our Health", specifically featuring translational medicine. Collaborative projects and strategic alliances that facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology have also been established with partners from the pharmaceutical and chemical industries and companies working in the field of biotechnology and medical technology. One such cooperation is that initiated by the University of Applied Sciences in Konstanz.

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