

PRESS RELEASE

**A first partnership with the Marseille Immunopôle
to reinforce the leadership of French research in immuno-oncology**

Paris, April 11, 2016 – As part of the framework agreement between Inserm and MSDAVENIR, 2 major research programs in the field of immuno-oncology conducted by the Marseille Immunopôle cluster, which includes amongst others Aix-Marseille University, CNRS and Inserm, are to receive funding of up to 5.4 million euros.

The aim of this research is to refine knowledge of the interactions between immune and cancer cells so that new treatment opportunities can be offered to patients who find themselves in a therapeutic impasse. The programs will be led by Professor Eric Vivier (AMU) and Doctor Bernard Malissen (CNRS), two of the cofounders of the Marseille Immunopôle (MI).

The two research programs:

1) the MI-RIOT program comprises **4 transversal projects** involving several MI research and care units and is based on an **interdisciplinary approach. The four projects will explore:**

- The impact and therapeutic potential of the tumor micro-environment in pancreatic cancers (project 1);
- The involvement of a hitherto unexploited growth factor in resistance to antiangiogenic agents and the diagnostic and therapeutic value of this new target (project 2);
- The contribution of NK lymphocytes to the detection and early elimination of cancer cells (project 3);
- The predictive value of a new type of immune cell, Innate Lymphoid Cells (ILC), in graft-versus-host reaction (project 4).

2) The Immunophenomics Center program (CNRS/Inserm/Aix-Marseille University) aims to identify potential synergies between different T lymphocyte signaling pathways, a challenge of primary importance to the development of future combinations that will further enhance the clinical impact of new immunotherapy antibodies such as anti-PD1.

A cluster with an international reputation, the Marseille Immunopôle constitutes a stronghold for the research and development of immune therapies and is one of the pioneers in immuno-oncology.

"Today, the Marseille Immunopôle reflects our commitment to moving up a gear, accelerating the development and discovery of immunotherapies. From this standpoint, the commitment made by MSDAVENIR is wholly unprecedented because through the research programs supported by this partnership, we shall be able to refine our knowledge in immuno-oncology" emphasized Professor Eric Vivier, Director of the Marseille-Luminy Center of Immunology.

About Marseille-Immunopôle – www.marseille-immunopole.org

Marseille Immunopôle (MI) focuses on the research and development of two approaches that are currently revolutionizing the treatment of cancers and inflammatory diseases: antibodies for immunotherapies and cellular therapies. MI assembles a continuum of excellence that is unique in the world, linking major national research institutions with regional centers of expertise. In particular, nearly 2,000 scientists are working together to accelerate the development of these innovations and patient access to them, and to position the Marseille metropolis at the heart of global competition.

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