

Interdisciplinary Center for Clinical Research (IZKF)

Chairman

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Aims and structure

The Interdisciplinary Center for Clinical Research (IZKF) is the central intramural structure of research development at the Faculty of Medicine. Its aim is to improve the overall quality of clinical research at the Faculty of Medicine, to stimulate interdisciplinary research, to advance the careers of young scientists, and to foster the acquisition of extramural funds. All focal research areas and interdisciplinary fields of the Faculty participate in IZKF, ensuring that nearly all institutions of the Faculty of Medicine can submit grant applications to the IZKF. Members of the Faculty of Sciences may participate as co-applicants in project proposals.

The IZKF is financed by the state grant for teaching and research of the Faculty of Medicine and a contribution from the FAU.

Research grants

Every three years, IZKF offers single and joint research grants in all research areas of the Faculty of Medicine. Prerequisites for a successful application to the IZKF include an active publication record, own external funding, an interdisciplinary approach, and relevant preliminary work.

If project leaders apply for external funding by the end of the funding period, an extension for another six months additionally to the regular 30 months' duration is provided.

In the funding period from 2016 – 2019, 28 of 31 projects (90%) already received a funding extension. This impressive success is also reflected by the fact that IZKF funding resulted in the acquisition of more extramural funds than what was originally spent.

Apart from external funding, the publication output is crucial when evaluating IZKF's performance in advancing clinically oriented research at the Faculty of Medicine. Furthermore, scientific diplomas, patents, scientific prizes, and offers of professorships are relevant parameters. In 2017, 58 funded projects altogether pub-

lished 75 original articles with a cumulative impact factor (IF) of 620.577; moreover 26 articles had an impact factor of over 10.

Career development

The IZKF research groups offer over a period of up to six years attractive career development opportunities for outstanding young scientists with a training in medicine or natural sciences in one of the Faculties' main research fields. The group of P. Ceppi, PhD, (junior research group 1) is working on the topic "Understanding the plasticity of cancer cells". The group of Dr. D. Dulin (junior research group 2) is engaged in the field "Physics and Medicine". Both junior research groups are highly regarded cooperation partners for scientific projects and actively participate in the teaching and training of young scientists.

The annually tendered starting grant is aimed at young postdoctoral scientists (maximum 35 years) from the entire Faculty of Medicine without previous significant external funding. Over a funding period of 2.5 years, applicants are to submit their first application to an external funding organization. In order to enable physicians to better reconcile their research activities with clinical requirements, IZKF offers positions for laboratory rotations.

The newly established Clinician Scientist Program of the IZKF was announced for the first time in 2018. The program is aimed at physicians who are interested in science, have completed their doctorate during their specialist medical training, and who also aim for a structured scientific qualification program. Parallel to the IZKF application, a lateral entry into the program is possible with a leave of absence from a research association or a clinic. In addition to the advanced module for physicians with third-party funding, a basic module for younger physicians with a completed doctorate is also offered.

Some laboratory rotations (over a period of six months full-time or twelve months part-time) can also be filled outside the starting grant and the Clinician Scientist Program. They can be applied for on an ongoing basis and are aimed at clinically active physicians who need time off from their clinical obligations to carry out their own research projects.

To support experimental medical doctoral theses, the IZKF provides up to 18 scholarships per year for eight months for MD students. All doctoral students of the IZKF attend the GK of the IZKF that participates in the graduate school Life@FAU (compare own report).

Start-up support (ELAN)

ELAN supports young scientists (maximum 38 years) from the entire Faculty of Medicine for a maximum period of twelve months. The aim of ELAN is to prepare scientific projects for a successful external funding application (start-up projects), to develop new innovative ideas (pilot projects) or act as interim funding if temporary gaps arise. The application is possible on an ongoing basis. From 2019 onwards, the instrument of bridging projects will also be available. This program is aimed at advanced scientists with no basic material or personnel resources beyond their own position who finance their research predominantly through third-party funding. In cases where the respective institution is not in a position to do so, the projects should enable a temporary bridging of a precarious situation (e.g. rejected application for third-party funding) with the aim of ensuring the continuity of research by experienced, independently researching scientists with a good prospect of timely acquisition of new external third-party funding.

Core facilities and supporting activities

Core facilities or units are centralized platforms offering access to these cost-intensive modern methods and technologies to a broad user spectrum. IZKF offers an initial funding of core facilities for one or two funding periods. The supporting activities include the Visiting Professor Program and an international scientific meeting. In addition, central funds for participating in scientific meetings, publication charges and particularly cost-intensive experiments (High Tech Pool) provide additional support for funded projects.

