

21 February 2023

PANCAID: EU-funded project to develop a blood test for early detection of pancreatic cancer kicks off

- **PANCAID, acronym for *PAN*creatic *CAN*cer *Initial Detection* via liquid biopsy, a 5-year-long EU-funded project, commenced work on 1 January 2023**
- **The project's international research consortium consists of 17 partners from eight countries**
- **It's main objective: To develop a minimally invasive blood test for the early detection of pancreatic cancer and its precursor lesions**

This is a huge leap forward for cancer research: [PANCAID \(www.pancaid-project.eu\)](http://www.pancaid-project.eu), acronym for *PAN*creatic *CAN*cer *Initial Detection* via liquid biopsy, is an international research project aiming to develop a minimally invasive blood test for the early detection of pancreatic cancer. The project, consisting of partners from eight countries, will receive a total of EUR 9.8M funding from the European Commission (EC) and use a comprehensive panel of liquid biopsy diagnostics to achieve this ambitious goal, as small tumours release only minute amounts of cells or cellular products into the circulation.

In the project, which is funded until 2027, scientists collect and analyse blood samples from patients with pancreatic cancer, its precursor lesions, as well as individuals at risk (for example, patients with a genetic predisposition). Using artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted computational analyses, the project will identify the best possible composite biomarker panel. Based on these findings, a blood test will be established and validated. "The impacts of PANCAID are huge: Apart from new insights into the biology and pathophysiology of pancreatic cancer, we pave the way to fill a substantial gap in the diagnosis of one of the most malignant cancers. At the end of the process, we want to have the prospective design ready to launch a multicentre randomised clinical trial, in which the new blood test will be investigated for its efficacy", said Prof. Dr Klaus Pantel, Director of the Institute of Tumor Biology at University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf and project coordinator of PANCAID.

Blood test could improve treatment and outcomes of pancreatic cancer

Pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC), the most common type of pancreatic cancer, usually only causes signs and symptoms such as weight loss, pain in the abdomen or back, loss of appetite, or nausea at later stages. "Most patients die within one year after diagnosis. The biggest challenge in the management of patients with pancreatic cancer is the current inability to diagnose it in time. Therefore, early detection and diagnosis are urgently needed", explained Prof. Dr Mattias Löhr, Professor of Gastroenterology at Karolinska Institutet and co-coordinator of PANCAID. "Developing a minimally invasive blood test with high sensitivity and specificity might not only enable physicians to diagnose the disease and initiate treatment earlier, but early detection of PDAC might also result in reduced mortality and better quality of life for cancer patients." About 150'000 people in the EU are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer every year.

Kick-off event: 13 – 15 February in Hamburg, Germany

The project comprises 17 partners from eight countries (Germany, Sweden, Spain, Austria, Belgium, France, Israel, and the United Kingdom), as part of the Horizon Europe programme

and EU Mission: Cancer. The project and funding by the EC started on 1 January 2023. The involved scientists kicked off the project from 13 to 15 February in Hamburg, Germany.



The members of the PANCAID consortium at the project's Kick-off Meeting in Hamburg, Germany, from 13 – 15 February 2023.

About PANCAID

Pancreatic cancer is usually detected at late stages, meaning that most patients die within one year after diagnosis¹.

PANCAID, acronym for **PAN**creatic **C**ancer **I**nitial **D**etection via *liquid biopsy*, is an international research consortium aiming to provide a minimally invasive blood test using a comprehensive panel of liquid biopsy diagnostics^{2,3} for the early detection of pancreatic cancer.

The research project, which receives funding for five years, commenced its work in January 2023.

These are the PANCAID consortium members:

- University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Germany
- Karolinska Institutet, Sweden
- Fundación del Sector Público Estatal Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Oncológicas Carlos III, Spain
- Medical University of Graz, Austria
- Umeå University, Sweden
- Pancreatic Cancer Europe, Belgium

¹ Michl P, Lohr M, Neoptolemos JP, Capurso G, Rebours V, Malats N, et al. UEG position paper on pancreatic cancer. Bringing pancreatic cancer to the 21st century: prevent, detect, and treat the disease earlier and better. *United European Gastroenterol J.* 2021;9(7):860–871. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ueg2.12123>

² Alix-Panabières C, Pantel K. Liquid Biopsy: From Discovery to Clinical Application. *Cancer Discov.* 2021 Apr;11(4):858-873. <https://doi.org/10.1158/2159-8290.CD-20-1311>

³ Lohr JM, Pantel K. Five plus three for the pancreas. *Clin Cancer Res* 2023(29): *online ahead of print.* <https://doi.org/10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-22-3977>

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- ZAVA Deutschland, Germany
- The Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

For more information, visit www.pancaid-project.eu.

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**Funded by
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