



“HDIR-7: Advances in Cancer Research & Treatment”

The 7th Meeting of the Croatian Association for Cancer Research with International Participation

November 7 & 8, 2024

Hotel International, Zagreb, Croatia

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

**Hrvatsko društvo za istraživanje raka (HDIR)
Croatian Association for Cancer Research (CACR)**

“HDIR-7: Advances in Cancer Research & Treatment” The 7th Meeting of the Croatian Association for Cancer Research with International Participation – Book of Abstracts

Impressum:

Editor:

Petar Ozretić, HDIR Secretary

Publisher:

Croatian Association for Cancer Research, Zagreb, Croatia

ISBN 978-953-48672-2-8

URL: http://stari.hdir.hr/docs/HDIR-7_BoA.pdf

Place and year of publication: Zagreb, November 2024

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Organizer:

Croatian Association for Cancer Research, Bijenička 54, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia

Venue:

Hotel International, Miramarska cesta 24, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia

Dates:

November 7 & 8, 2024

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Supported by:

European Association for Cancer Research (EACR)

Sponsors:

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L1: Biobanking from Scratch: A Roadmap to Setup a Rectal Cancer Biobank Within the STEPUPIORS Project

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The aim of the Horizon Europe STEPUPIORS project is to determine the molecular profile of response to neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy in locally advanced rectal cancer, a disease of high public health concern in Serbia, with a rising incidence especially in the under 50-year-olds. Advances in the translational cancer research rely on the use of human tissue samples donated by consenting patients. At the Institute for Oncology and Radiology of Serbia (IORS), biological samples were traditionally collected over the past decades within biorepositories confined to a particular study, with little, if any, reuse of the remaining material. Within the STEPUPIORS project, we aim to address the shortcomings of project-based repositories by forming a highly organized and tightly-controlled biobanking system that will function in accordance with internationally accepted technical, scientific, and logistical standards while respecting national legislation. However, building a biobank is challenging, even in countries with appropriate scientific and health-related funds and there are many aspects that need to be considered. Here we outlined the roadmap towards building a fully operational minimal viable biobank.

Firstly, awareness of the local context covering demographics, epidemiology, healthcare and research setting was necessary to identify stakeholders and define the scope, opportunities and restrictions for biobanking at IORS. An indispensable step was dedicated to learning about biobanking through visits to biobanks in partner institutions, external online and onsite trainings, and ample literature on biobanking from international organizations. A critical step required thorough consideration of ethical, legal and societal issues pertinent to biobanking in national and international context. The implementation phase covered the establishment of the organizational structure and human resources, development of informed consent and standard operating procedures (SOP), and setting up the required infrastructure and laboratory information systems. The first rectal cancer biobank at IORS was established in October 2023 and is expected to become fully functional by the end of 2024, with the aim of contributing to the understanding of pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer. The biobank will be used for a broad spectrum of future research projects, and also as a pilot project for other biobanks planned to be formed in Serbia in the future.