



### SWISS BRIDGE AWARD 2018

### 500'000 CHF for Research on Immuno-oncology Biomarkers



October, 24th  
Haus zum Rüden, Zürich

#### Two-stage evaluation process

With this year's call, the SWISS BRIDGE Foundation invited researchers under the age of 45 to close this knowledge gap. A total of 111 scientists from all over Europe applied for the SWISS BRIDGE Award 2018. The jury of respected experts used a two-stage evaluation process to finally select two projects.

Dr. Ping-Chih Ho with son,  
Prof. Jakob Passweg (President),  
Dr. Rodrigo Toledo,  
Prof. Gordon McVie (Chairman of Scientific Jury),  
Philipp Lücke (CEO)

Immunotherapies, such as checkpoint inhibitors – whose discoverers won this year's Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine – raise hope and are promising, because they can sometimes also cure patients with advanced-stage cancers. However, immunotherapies are also cause for frustration because they often fail, with only about 20% of the treated patients responding to these types of therapies. Medical science does not yet know in advance with whom these therapies will work.

Today, the two project leaders, **Dr. Ping-Chih Ho**, from the Ludwig Cancer Center, University of Lausanne, Switzerland, and **Dr. Rodrigo de Almeida Toledo**, from the Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology in Barcelona, Spain, **each receive CHF 250'000**, for the realization of their research projects.

Dr. Ping-Chih Ho's team is interested in the difference between tumors referred to as cold and hot tumors. While immunotherapies usually work well on hot tumors, they fail to work on cold tumors, because the cold tumor's surrounding environment apparently prevents immune cells from migrating into the tumor tissue and exerting their effect there. Recently, Ho and his team discovered a gene that is only active in hot tumors. In mice, the researchers even managed to activate the gene in cold tumors – and thus make the tumor environment accessible again to cancer-fighting immune cells. Now, this team of researchers would like to find out if the gene plays such a similar crucial role in humans – and shall perhaps develop a test to predict the answer to successful immunotherapy.

The research project of Dr. Rodrigo de Almeida Toledo and his team is about collecting samples from patients in Barcelona who have been treated with a variety of different immunotherapies. Genomic analysis – that is, the comparison of the entire genome in tumors of patients who respond well to therapy and that of genetic material in tumors which continue to grow despite the treatment – is intended to uncover differences that will not only inform the prediction of the response to immunotherapy that could be used in the future, but perhaps also provide a clue to possible new targets in the fight against tumors.

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