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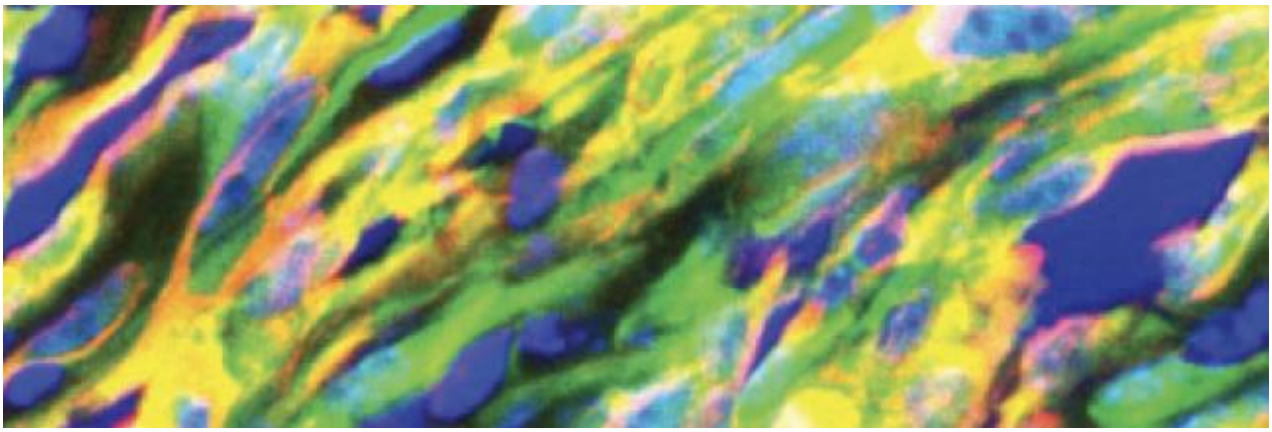
BREAKTHROUGH DISCOVERY IN CANCER RESEARCH FUNDED BY THE ERC



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Highlight | 19-04-2018

Researchers at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), funded by grants from the European Research Council (ERC), have taken a big leap forward in cancer research. The research team led by Professor Cédric Blanpain defined for the first time tumour growth phases during cancer progression and identified the types of tumour cells causing metastases in skin and breast cancer. Skin cancer is the most frequent cancer worldwide and breast cancer is the most frequent cancer in women.

Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas said: "I am extremely pleased to hear that once again ERC researchers have found a way to solve a – let me call it – research mystery. The fight against cancer is a paramount mission of the scientific community. This discovery underlines the importance of curiosity-driven research and how much it contributes to our society."

ERC President Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon said: “This breakthrough is a wonderful example of the way in which motivated researchers can deepen our basic understanding when given the means and the freedom to follow their best ideas. Europe needs to nurture more blue sky research - it can benefit citizens and society at large."

Prof. Cédric Blanpain said: “The identification of these different tumour transition states […] has very important implications for developing new strategies to block tumour progression and metastasis.”

Professor Blanpain received over the last ten years ERC grants worth €4 million directly supporting his work in cancer research and these breakthrough results. The findings, published by Nature magazine, show that researchers were able to identify at least seven different types of tumour cells and demonstrated that they are not all functionally equivalent and equally metastatic. This discovery will have major implications for the diagnosis, prognosis and therapy of cancer patients. See press release from the ULB.

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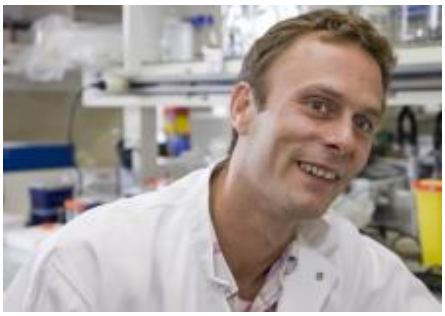

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF STEM CELLS IN SKIN CANCER