

MEDIENMITTEILUNG - VERSION UEBERSETZUNG 26.5.,16H

Innovation behind the glass facade - where sitem-insel stands today.

Bern, May 27, 2021 - The Swiss Institute for Translational and Entrepreneurial Medicine, sitem-insel, started operations in August 2019 in the impressive glass building on the Insel Campus Bern. The PPP project as a collaboration between the public sector, science and industry is on track. After the massive restrictions due to Corona, sitem-insel is picking up speed again. At the media briefing held today, representatives provided information on the current status of sitem-insel, its priorities and challenges. To illustrate the overall sitem-insel system with examples, representatives of the Translational Imaging Center TIC and AlveoliX - two of the now more than 25 units operating within the building - explained their work.

After the launch of sitem-insel, the new building rapidly filled with 'life'. sitem-insel AG Chairman of the Board Daniel Buser uses the image of a beehive. The desired exchange and networking among all units was established very quickly. This is also thanks to the services of the sitem-insel AG team. On the one hand, the non-profit AG provides services for the so-called units and thus ensures that researchers find the best conditions in the building and network. On the other hand, sitem-insel AG also runs its own units such as the sitem-insel School or an excellently equipped Clinical Anatomy Training and Research Unit (CATR). sitem-insel sees itself as an overall system to promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Once again, Daniel Buser emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of the close interaction and proximity between research, clinical practice and economy at the Insel Campus Bern. The Insel Campus Bern is one of the most important development focal points of the Canton of Bern and is expected to have a national and international impact.

Promoting the translational process

For a research product to reach the market, tests or clinical trials, approval processes and a business model including financing are needed. Simon Rothen, CEO sitem-insel AG, explains: "That's why the various players - researchers, stakeholders from industry, universities, clinics, associations and private players - should work together in a process-oriented manner. This collaboration - we are a kind of 'mediator' - is supported and promoted by sitem-insel."

Development of own business areas abruptly interrupted

The intensive build-up phase following the opening in summer 2019 was abruptly halted in March 2020 by the Corona pandemic. Corona had an unprecedented impact on almost all business areas of sitem-insel AG, but also on the units. CEO Simon Rothen explains: "The translational process means acceleration. From one day to the next, we - like very many companies and institutions - had to adapt our business activities, in some cases completely stop them. Our team responded with professionalism and exemplary strength." Simon Rothen expresses his thanks to all those involved. From a financial perspective, sitem-insel AG was confronted with dramatic declines in expected revenues due to Corona. These were caused by social restrictions and changes in healthcare priorities. As an example he mentions the courses of sitem-insel's own School, events or even trainings within the CATR (Clinical Anatomy), which could not be carried out or only in a reduced scope.

sitem-insel reacted very quickly and prepared a risk analysis for the Canton of Bern. The Canton of Berne provided additional funding to ensure that the work could be continued in any case and that the loss of income could be mitigated. At the same time, sitem-insel has reduced costs with various measures. Daniel

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Buser, Chairman of the Board of Directors, comments: "The Canton of Berne reacted very quickly in these difficult times and promised us its support. On behalf of sitem-insel, I would like to thank them for the trust they have placed in us."

Highlights biosafety laboratory BSL-3 and startup promotion

CEO Simon Rothen is particularly proud of the fact that despite Corona, the level 3 biosafety laboratory (BSL-3) operated by IFIK, the Institute for Infectious Diseases at the University of Bern, was able to go into operation as planned in June last year. Unique is the fact that two rental laboratories are integrated in the high-security laboratory. Recently, research has also been conducted there on corona viruses as part of two projects in the spirit of translational medicine.

With the *Sitem Startup Club* the promotion of startups is pushed. With an initiative from sitem-insel, the Sitem Startup Club (SSC) was launched and presented to the public in January this year. The SSC is an initiative supported by renowned, exclusively private partners. It offers startups in the MedTech sector access to consulting, coaching, potential investors and cost-effective workspace in the newly emerging Sitem MedTech Hub on the edge of the Insel Campus Bern. The long-term settlement of MedTech companies in the canton of Bern is the overriding goal.

Financial independence

The sitem-insel AG was founded in 2014 with its most important partners (science, clinic and industry) within the framework of a shareholder pool. The authorized share capital amounts to around 18 million Swiss francs. Of this, around 5 million francs are still free for further shareholders today. Daniel Buser, Chairman of the Board of Directors, comments: "Further private investors are being sought to subscribe to these shares. This will ensure that the public-private partnership will also be reflected in the share capital in the long term." The federal government and the canton of Bern have also granted sitem-insel further start-up financing of around 5.6 million Swiss francs each for the period from 2021 to 2024 after the 2017 to 2020 period. "In order to live up to the performance agreement with its political partners, sitem-insel AG is doing everything in its power to become financially self-sustaining in operational terms as quickly as possible," affirms CEO Simon Rothen. And he adds: "We will now pick up speed quickly after Corona to resume where we were only able to continue our build-up work in March 2020 with the 'handbrake on'." According to Simon Rothen, the priority at the strategic level is the placement of the remaining free share capital and at the operational level the continuation and expansion of our own units and those of our community.

AlveoliX - New lung models for new drugs

AlveoliX is a Bernese startup that emerged from the ARTORG Center for Biomedical Engineering Research at the University of Bern. The young company has developed a lung chip (lung-on-chip) that maps the human lung with its cells, structure and acting forces, for example during inhalation and exhalation. This 1:1 mapping makes it possible to test drugs in a way that is unique to date. Among other things, the lung chip models can be used to test whether a particular drug, which is still in development, produces side effects. AlveoliX is also working on models that simulate diseases on the chip in order to develop new drugs. Such models have great potential to play an important role in personalized medicine in the future. AlveoliX has established collaborations with pharmaceutical companies to further advance the technology. Research and innovation is

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conducted in sitem-insel, while production and the engineering site are located in Biel. Janick Stucki, CEO & Technical Director of AlveoliX on the sitem-insel site: "Thanks to the unique mix of large and small companies as well as the integration of the University of Bern, AlveoliX finds a wide variety of interactions for innovation. We work within sitem-insel with CSL Behring and also use the biosafety lab BSL-3. This unique lab also allows us to conduct research in the field of viral diseases with highly infectious viruses like SARS-CoV-2."

Translational Imaging Center TIC - Precise imaging can avoid examinations

Around 30 clinics and research institutes of the Insel Group, the University of Bern and the University Psychiatric Services Bern form the Magnetic Resonance Research Consortium, from which the Translational Imaging Center (TIC) was formed. The TIC has an MRI with a magnetic field strength of 3 Tesla (Magnetom Prisma) and today's most powerful device with clinical approval, the MRI 7 Tesla (Magnetom Terra), both from Siemens Healthineers. The two devices weighing several tons were brought into sitem-insel in April 2019, and the first work could begin in July. Standard for clinical examinations today are magnetic field strengths of 1.5 and 3 Tesla. The very high image resolution of the 7 Tesla enables precise diagnoses where expensive examinations are necessary today. Currently, more than 50 translational research projects from the Magnetic Resonance Research Consortium are ongoing at the TIC, as well as participation in national and international studies with both devices. Prof. Roland Wiest, Head of Neuroimaging TIC and Deputy Chief Physician University Institute for Diagnostic and Interventional Neuroradiology Inselspital gives an example for 7 Tesla: "In a study, investigations are underway to detect metabolites of brain tumors, which capture the molecular genetic status of a tumor without the need for an invasive biopsy." And as an example of 3 Tesla, he cites memory research in individuals with cognitive impairment in old age. Prof. emeritus Lutz Nolte, CEO TIC, on the translational process: "The two devices offer a unique platform for translational MRI-based research and development. On the one hand, through the broad application potential of the technology, but also through the collaboration with the many active research groups on the Insel Campus Bern and a wide variety of units in sitem-insel."

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Research swiftly reaching the patient

sitem-insel is the Swiss Institute for Translational and Entrepreneurial Medicine. Our mission is to bring research to the patient as quickly as possible and in the highest quality. sitem-insel is located at the Insel Campus Bern and benefits from the proximity to the largest Swiss university hospital (Insel-Spital) as well as to the largest medical faculty in Switzerland (University of Bern). In sitem-insel, a wide variety of units from the hospital, industry, research and education are networked under one roof and pursue innovation for the benefit of the patient. The architecture of the 20'000m² transparent glass building corresponds to the idea of openness and multidisciplinary cooperation.

PPP-Project

sitem-insel is a PPP project (Public Private Partnership) and started operations at the beginning of 2017 as a non-profit corporation. PPP means the partnership of the public sector (Canton of Bern and the federal government), science (Insel-Spital, University of Bern, Bern University of Applied Sciences and other partners) and the economy. sitem-insel institutionally represents the interaction of university research, clinic and economy in a unique and new way.

Strengthening the medical location

For the Canton of Bern, sitem-insel is a "lighthouse" to further strengthen Bern as a medical location. In the long term, sitem-insel is to have a nationwide and international impact.