

PRESS RELEASE

MECHTILD HARF RESEARCH GRANTS 2019

BLOOD CANCER RESEARCH: DKMS FOUNDATION FOR GIVING LIFE SUPPORTS FOUR YOUNG SCIENTISTS

Tübingen / Frankfurt a.M., 26 March 2019 – The DKMS Foundation for Giving Life is supporting international blood cancer research with four new research grants with a combined value of €1 million. The DKMS Mechtild Harf Research Grants 2019 have been awarded to four physicians and young scientists – two from Germany and two from the US – to support their promising scientific research projects in the field of stem cell transplantation. All four focus on improving cell therapies and reducing the complications that still arise after transplantations. Funding is provided for a period of three years.

Presented on the fringes of this year's EBMT Congress (European Society for Blood and Marrow Transplantation) in Frankfurt am Main, the DKMS Mechtild Harf Research Grants 2019 went to: **Dr. Natalie Köhler** from Freiburg University Clinic (Defensitis as a potential treatment option for acute graft versus host disease (GvHD)); **Dr rer. nat. Katarina Reisner** from the Charité hospital in Berlin (Mechanisms and therapeutic targets of endothelin damage during GvDH), and **Kate Ann Markey, MB BS, PhD** from the MSKCC-Mortimer B Zuckerman Research Center in New York, US (Investigating the role of microbiota in chronic GvHD and immune reconstitution after HCT). The research of all three focuses on different aspects of graft versus host disease (GvHD), an immunological reaction in which donor immune cells identify tissues in the recipient's body as foreign, often with extremely serious consequences.

The fourth research grant went to **Dr. May Daher** from the MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas in Houston, US (CIS checkpoint deletion in cord blood derived iC9.CAR19.IL-15-NK cells for the treatment of B-cell hematologic malignancies). Daher's project aims to modify natural killer cells from cord blood to direct them more effectively against leukemia cells.

"We see our research grants as an extremely important investment in the future of innovative blood cancer research. They will enable us to gain new insights that will improve the results of stem cell transplantations for patients and advance the fight against blood cancer," said Dr. Alexander Schmidt, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at DKMS gemeinnützige GmbH.

DKMS first established its Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) in 2013, to help advance both its own research into blood cancer and that of upcoming scientists working on international projects. Since 2015 the annual DKMS Mechtild Harf Research Grants have been awarded to help develop a better understanding of blood cancer and its complex immunological links to the transplantation of hematopoietic stem cells, and to improve other cellular therapies for malignant hematological disorders.

The DKMS Mechtild Harf Research Grants are dedicated to the memory of Mechtild Harf, the wife of Peter Harf, who established DKMS in Germany in 1991 after her death from leukemia.

To find out more, go to: <https://www.dkms.org/en/mechtild-harf-research-grants>

About DKMS

DKMS is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the fight against blood cancer. Our mission is to give as many patients as possible a second chance at life. We are a world leader in the provision of stem cells for life-saving transplantations. DKMS is active not only in Germany but also in the US, Poland, UK and Chile, with a combined total of more than 8.7 million donors in our registry. We also carry out scientific research, setting standards in the typing of new stem cell donors in our DKMS Life Science Lab.

About the DKMS Foundation for Giving Life

The DKMS Foundation for Giving Life is the parent organization of DKMS and focuses, among other things, on advancing research projects in the field of stem cell removal and transplantation. The DKMS Mechtild Harf Science Award has been presented since 2001 and honors the best scientific advances in this field.

Regional statistics, images and other stories are available to journalists from our DKMS Media Centre at: mediacenter.dkms.de

To keep up with the latest news, follow us on [Twitter](#). Find out more about DKMS and the fight against cancer from our corporate blog: dkms-insights.de.