



SCIENCE MEETS INDUSTRY DAY

BDC MEETING SPACE, HEIDELBERG | OCTOBER 19-20, 2026

- Profiles of Contributing Academic Participants -



Prof. Dr. Stefan Pfister

Director Preclinical Pediatric Oncology KiTZ
Division Head "Pediatric Neurooncology", DKFZ
Deputy Head KiTZ Clinical Trial Unit and Brain
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matology and Immunology, UKHD

Spokesperson of the DKTK

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Research focus of my institution

We research the molecular underpinnings of brain tumors in both children and adults, utilizing methods such as methylation-based tumor classification and omics technologies including single cell and spatial omics. Our most recent projects have concentrated on the origins of pediatric tumors during the embryonic phase and parallels between normal development and pediatric cancer. Another focus is on repurposing adult cancer drugs for children, identifying synergistic combinations, and companion biomarkers, also utilizing our ITCC-P4 spin-off.

Where do I see opportunities for future academia–industry collaboration?

I would like to see closer collaboration that brings together the complementary expertise of academia and industry, supported by joint mentoring of students and postdocs, knowledge exchange, and shared training opportunities to make this career path more tangible for colleagues in the academic sector. We would also love to see more early joint developments, especially in rare cancers, in order to accelerate the translation of research findings into clinical practice for these patients, utilizing the outstanding DKTK and NCT infrastructure that we have in Germany.

My personal goal for this meeting

To build strong networks, foster open and trust-based discussions, and establish a clear roadmap or structured process for evaluating and advancing promising ideas toward collaborative (early development) projects and a structured mentoring curriculum for students and postdocs.



Prof. Dr. Dr. Melanie Börries

Director of the Institute of Medical
Bioinformatics and Systems Medicine,
Medical Center - University of Freiburg
Director for Data-Driven Medicine of the
CCC Freiburg, Spokesperson of the DKTK
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Deputy Spokesperson of the DKTK

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Research focus of my institution

Advancing personalized medicine by integrating multi-omics and clinical data through computational analyses, including AI-based methods, to predict treatment response and identify biomarkers, with translation into improved diagnostics and clinical trials.

Where do I see opportunities for future academia–industry collaboration?

I would like to see closer collaboration that brings together the complementary expertise of academia and industry, supported by joint mentoring, knowledge exchange, and shared training opportunities to accelerate the translation of research findings into clinical practice.

My personal goal for this meeting

To establish meaningful connections, encourage transparent and trust-based exchanges, and develop a clear roadmap or structured process for evaluating and advancing promising ideas toward collaborative projects.



Dr. Philipp Gebhardt

DKTK Coordination Office, German Cancer
Research Center (DKFZ)

Scientific Managing Director DKTK

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Focus of my institution

The DKTK Central Coordination Office serves as the consortium's administrative and organizational hub, supporting the implementation of DKTK's strategic objectives. The team coordinates large-scale collaborative research activities, ensuring efficient processes and active engagement across partner sites.

Where do I see opportunities for future academia–industry collaboration?

I see great potential for closer academia-industry collaboration to identify translational challenges early, align research with development needs, and jointly advance clinical applications. Greater interaction between early-career researchers and industry professionals could broaden career perspectives and foster a seamless knowledge and talent exchange.

My personal goal for this meeting

I envisage the Science meets Industry Day as an opportunity to identify shared research priorities, establish concrete collaborations, and initiate joint projects and follow-up activities that strengthen academia-industry partnerships and advance translational research.



Dr. Silke Uhrig-Schmidt

Program Manager Entrepreneurship, Innovation Management, DKFZ

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Focus of my institution

At DKFZ Innovation Management, I support the translation of cancer research into societal impact by building bridges between researchers, industry and investors. By entrepreneurship training and community building I enable scientists to transfer promising scientific discoveries into innovative products and spin-offs.

Where do I see opportunities for future academia–industry collaboration?

I see great potential in an earlier exchange between academic research and industry to align scientific findings with unmet medical needs, accelerate translational development and jointly advance promising innovations from the lab to clinical application. The industry perspective can also add substantial value and diversity to spin-off teams.

My personal goal for this meeting

As a cancer patient and moderator of the research pitch session, I hope to connect scientific innovation with real patient needs and foster meaningful partnerships between researchers and industry. I would also like to engage with industry experts who like to share their knowledge with the next generation of innovators through our entrepreneurship programs.



Dr. Mariana Schulte-Sasse
Postdoc and Clinician Scientist Programs
Manager, DKFZ

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Focus of my institution

My team supports around 450 postdoctoral researchers and clinician scientists during their time at the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ). Among other things, our team organizes international recruitment and selection processes, funding programs, onboarding events, continuing education and career opportunities, and networking events.

Where do I see opportunities for future academia–industry collaboration?

I would like to see mobility between academia and industry become more circular and permeable. Moving into industry is still often perceived as a one-way transition, particularly for postdoctoral researchers. I would like to see more programs that enable researchers to explore and gain experience in another sector without feeling that they are closing the door on their current career path.

My personal goal for this meeting

I hope to connect with people from both academia and industry, exchange perspectives, and gain inspiration from existing approaches to cross-sector collaboration. In particular, I would like to explore how we can work together to develop practical programs that make mobility between academia and industry easier, especially for postdoctoral researchers. I hope the event can spark new connections and ideas that may ultimately lead to concrete collaborations and opportunities for researchers to gain experience across both sectors.



Prof. Dr. Antonia Busse

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Cellular Therapy; Lead Physician and Head
of the Cellular Therapy Unit

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DKTK TO NCT USE CASE

ToMA4TA

Focus of my group

Our research focuses on translating innovative cellular and immune therapies into early clinical trials, from our own developments to products originating from collaborating research teams, with expertise in TCR-T therapies, cellular engineering and academic ATMP development.

From DKTK to NCT: ToMATA as a translational use case

ToMATA translates an HLA-A1-restricted MAGE-A4 TCR-T therapy with a TGF- β switch receptor targeting the immunosuppressive tumor microenvironment, developed by Felix Lorenz's team at MDC and further advanced through their spin-off Captain T Cell, into a multicenter NCT phase I trial in solid tumors.

Where would I like to see future interaction with industry?

Partnerships to accelerate the translation of academic cell therapies through manufacturing, technology transfer and joint early clinical development, while also bringing innovative industry-developed cell therapy products into academic early-phase clinical trials.

My personal goal for this meeting

To identify complementary expertise and potential partners who can help move promising academic cell therapy concepts across the translational gap and establish sustainable models for academia-industry co-development.



Prof. Dr. Björn Scheffler

DKTK Professor

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Dr. Celia Dobersalske

PostDoc

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RESEARCH PITCH

CONSOLIDATE

What is your project about?

We are translating our discovery of cranial bone lymphoids (Dobersalske et al., Nature Medicine, 2024) into an autologous cell therapy for glioblastoma, harnessing the immune potential of skull bone marrow.

Where are you currently on the path toward translation/transfer?

We are standardizing cell procurement and characterization and developing GMP-compliant expansion protocols to produce a clinical-grade cell product for first-in-human evaluation.

Which support are you envisaging from a partnership with industry?

We seek industry expertise in process development, manufacturing and scale-up to turn our translational approach into a robust industrial workflow and build a platform for broader clinical applications.

What is your personal goal for the meeting?

Our goal is to forge partnerships that translate skull bone immunology into new diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic opportunities for CNS cancers and inflammatory diseases.



Dr. Violaine Goidts
Junior Group Leader at the DKFZ

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Dr. Emma Phillips
PostDoc at the DKFZ

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RESEARCH PITCH

DrugSeq Solutions

What is your project about?

We have developed a drug-oligo barcoding platform for single-cell RNA-seq that quantifies intracellular drug levels alongside the transcriptome. This resolves true biologically resistant cell populations from those with low drug uptake, ultimately revealing mechanisms of drug resistance in oncology.

Where are you currently on the path toward translation/transfer?

We have proof of concept data demonstrating feasibility, with preliminary data revealing distinct resistant vs responsive populations, which is the basis of our granted patent. We are now expanding our model panel, strengthening validation and moving towards spatial readouts.

Which support are you envisaging from a partnership with industry?

We are seeking partners to provide clinical stage candidates and potentially resistant cell lines for joint resistance and combination studies, plus funding and translational expertise to scale validation toward pharma-relevant decision making.

What is your personal goal for the meeting?

We hope to spark interest with the industrial partners and have some lively conversations, ideally identifying pilot collaboration opportunities, eg we perform resistance profiling of a partner's drug candidate in a heterogenous model. And if they happen to have spare money, we've got pockets!



Prof. Dr. Sven Diederichs

Professor for Cancer Research
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DKTK Freiburg

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RESEARCH PITCH

ResistMut

What is your project about?

Saturation mutational scanning allows the comprehensive identification of all resistance and / or activating mutations for a targeted therapy inhibitor and thereby allows the definition of the actionable mutations prior to a clinical trial.

Where are you currently on the path toward translation/transfer?

The technique has been established and a complete map of activating and resistant mutations in the four FGFR genes (~30.000 mutations) has been generated as a pilot project - in part under sponsored research agreements with a pharma company to expand the patient portfolio for their inhibitor.

Which support are you envisaging from a partnership with industry?

Pre-clinical or early-stage clinical targeted therapy compounds, knowledge about the targeted pathway and model systems, interest in comprehensively identifying activating or resistant mutations - to better select patients in clinical trials or to broaden the patient spectrum for approved drugs.

What is your personal goal for the meeting?

Finding new industry partners to exploit our saturation mutational scanning platform for future joint projects, eg in the form of sponsored research agreements to identify activating and resistant mutations in drug targets.