If recent trends in major cancers are seen globally in the future, the burden of cancer will increase to 22 million new cases each year by 2030. This represents an increase of 75% compared to 2008. The BioAlps region is uniquely placed as a hub of multidisciplinary innovation in the field: pharmaceutical and biotechnology research and development, fundamental and clinical research, mechanical and informatics research and platforms all cross-fertilise to bring the best to healthcare systems.

The different universities in the cluster have world class research ranging from fundamental to clinical and translational research. Notably, two well-respected cancer treatment drugs used internationally, oxaliplatin and triptorelin, were developed by Lausanne-based company Debiopharm. MerckSerono’s state-of-the-art facility near Vevey produces another cancer drug, cetuximab.

The National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) in Molecular Oncology, a Swiss network research programme, aims to strengthen basic cancer research in Switzerland and to explore, in cooperation with partners in different university hospitals and the pharmaceutical industry, the possibilities for new cancer therapies. Led by the Swiss Institute for Experimental Cancer Research (ISREC) at the EPFL in Lausanne in close collaboration with several partner institutes, the programme is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK) consists of a network of 20 clinical cancer research groups across Switzerland, with a coordinating centre in Bern. One of its projects is entitled “New Anticancer drugs”, with an innovative model to discover new remedies.

The Swiss Cancer Centre, based in the Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV) is a joint effort of the CHUV, UNIL, EPFL and the ISREC Foundation. It will accommodate 400 researchers and clinicians on 11,500 m² as early as 2016, bringing together scientists and practitioners under one roof. It will pool resources in an effort to combat the disease: ground-breaking progress in understanding the mechanisms specific to each pathology, optimised management of targeted therapies, networking of advances benefitting patients under treatment.

GENOMIC HEALTH: LEADERSHIP IN GENOMIC CANCER DIAGNOSTICS

Founded by biotech industry veteran Randy Scott in 2000 to develop efficient oncology diagnostics, United States-based Genomic Health started expanding out of the US and into worldwide markets eight years later. Geneva attracted the company in 2009, representing a place with easy access to technologies, knowledge and infrastructure. Genomic Health conducts sophisticated genomic studies and research to develop and commercialise clinically-validated molecular diagnostic tests, which provide individualised information on response to certain types of cancer therapy and the likelihood of disease recurrence. The company has commercially available tests for breast, colon and prostate cancer patients: the Oncotype DX for invasive breast, DCIS, colon, and prostate cancer assays are unique diagnostic tests that help patients and their physicians make more informed, individualised treatment decisions. Selected on several occasion to present in the “Best of Oncology” sessions at ASCO, Genomic Health’s cancer assays are currently used all over the world.
MULTIDISCIPLINARITY A UNIQUE ADVANTAGE

Cancer research benefits from the many disciplines available in Western Switzerland. The proximity and dynamism of the region's research institutions, teaching and research private and public hospitals, commercial companies and technology platforms, provide an environment capable of bringing strong innovations to world markets.

The lists below are non exhaustive and showcase some examples of the work being done in the region. Find more information in our extensive database: bioalps.org/community/ and, for the six Alpine regions, alpslifesciencesearch.com

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AT THE FOREFRONT OF ONCOLOGY IN WESTERN SWITZERLAND

Geneva University UNIGE
Department of Radio-oncology Radiodiagnositics and interventional radiology medecine.unige.ch
Department of Pathology and Immunology Epithelial tumours unige.ch/medecine/pati/en

Geneva University UNIGE & Geneva University Hospitals HUG
Centre de Recherche Clinique Phase I-III clinical trials and physiopathology, including cancer trials crc.hug-ge.ch

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne EPFL
ISREC (Swiss Institute for Experimental Cancer Research) Cell signalling in tumour development and metastasis; tumour angiogenesis; tumour immunity and cancer immunotherapy isrec.epfl.ch
CSEM (Centre Suisse d'Électronique et de Microtechnique) Mechanical probing of cells; spectroscopy and microscopy of cancer cells csem.ch

University of Bern UNIBE
Department of Medicine Clinical Research Ovarian, hepatic, metastatic, pediatric oncology dbf.unibe.ch
Dr Joseph Steiner Cancer Research Foundation Cancer research: new basic concepts, new diagnostic or therapeutic approaches and preventive methods steinerstiftung.unibe.ch

Bern University Hospital INSELSPIRAL
University Clinic for Medical Oncology Mechanisms of cancer development: solid tumours, lymphoma, melanoma onkologie.insel.ch
University Clinic for Radiotherapy External beam radiotherapy, intensity-modulated radiotherapy kro.insel.ch

University of Lausanne UNIL
Department of Biochemistry Discovery and functional characterization of pathways that govern cell division, cell differentiation, cell death and membrane fusion unl.ch

University Hospital of Lausanne CHUV
Centre du Cancer Cancer research and treatment (ambulatory oncology; oncology treatment; clinical investigation; experimental and translational research) cancer-chuv.ch

UNIGE, UNIL, EPFL, CHUV, HUG
CIBM (Centre d’Imagerie BioMédicale) Medical imaging cibm.ch

SAMPLE LIST OF LARGE AND SMALL COMPANIES INVOLVED IN ONCOLOGY IN THE BIOALPS CLUSTER

ADC THERAPEUTICS Antibody drug conjugates for treatment of solid and hematological cancers adctherapeutics.com
AMAL THERAPEUTICS Peptide-based therapeutic cancer vaccines amaltherapeutics.com
CELGENE Immuno-oncology therapies - hematological and solid tumors. celgene.eu
CELESTIA BIOTECH NOTCH inhibitor anti-cancer drugs cellestia.com
DEBIOPHARM GROUP Peptide research, drug delivery, personalized medicine debiopharm.com
GENOMIC HEALTH Diagnostic tests for breast, colon and prostate cancer genomichealth.com
INCYTE INTERNATIONAL Therapeutics small molecules for immunology treatment incyte.com
LONZA Highly active pharmaceutical ingredients (HAPIs) for cancer treatment lonza.com
MAXIVAX Encapsulated cellular cancer immunotherapy maxivax.ch
MEDDISCOVERY Protein drugs for uro-genital cancers med-discovery.com
MERCK Targeted biotechnology cancer therapeutic manufacturing merckgroup.com
PHI PHARMA Peptide drug conjugates against leukemia phi-pharma.com
PFM MEDICAL Valves and catheters for administering cytotoxic agents pfmmedical.com
SANOFI Chemotherapy and therapeutic agents for different cancers sanofi-aventis.ch

The fact sheet provides a view of the key players in the sector at any given time; it is not comprehensive and is subject to regular updates. This current edition was updated in Autumn 2019.

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INTERNATIONAL BIOTECH
Against leukemia
Av. de Sécheron 15 | Bât. F2
021 508 11 11
Swisslife BioAlps
Corinne Zimmermann
Swisslife Life Sciences
Corinne Zimmermann
Département fédéral de l'économie Département fédéral de l'économie
Secrétariat d'Etat à l'économie Secrétariat d'Etat à l'économie
Swisslife BioAlps
Corinne Zimmermann
Swisslife Life Sciences
Corinne Zimmermann
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Swisslife BioAlps
Corinne Zimmermann
Swisslife Life Sciences
Corinn