



CCBIO Newsletter

Newsletter No. 1, Vol. 2 –27.03.2015

Contact information

www.ccbio.no

Centre Director:

Prof. Dr.Med Lars A. Akslen

+ 47 55 97 31 82

lars.akslen@k1.uib.no

Administrative Leader:

Geir Olav Løken

+ 47 55 58 54 36

geir.loken@k1.uib.no

The nine Principal

Investigators:

[Lars A. Akslen](#)

[Bjørn Tore Gjertsen](#)

[Donald Gullberg](#)

[Anne C. Johannessen](#)

[Karl Henning Kalland](#)

[James Lorens](#)

[Rolf Reed](#)

[Helga B. Salvesen](#)

[Oddbjørn Straume](#)

Coming CCBIO events:

- 7 April, Doctoral dissertation defense - Katarzyna Wnuk-Lipinska.
- 8 April, CCBIO Special Seminar: "Tumor plasticity and drug resistance"
- 14 April, Filosofisk poliklinikk: "Prioritering sett innenfra – hvordan oppstår spillereglene?" Talk by Ole Frithjof Norheim
- 30 April, CCBIO Seminar, Lorena Arranz
- 19-20 May, CCBIO's 3rd Annual Symposium

Director's comments

International collaboration and networking is important to strengthen our research programs and excellence profile. CCBIO is now in the process of recruiting several international key collaborators.

As the first one, professor Arne Östman from The Karolinska Institute was hired by the University of Bergen in February 2015 in a 20% position at CCBIO. Several other international candidates are currently in process. We are also strengthening our activities in health economics, and professor Jan Erik Askildsen at UiB has been appointed as associate investigator at CCBIO. Our Research School for Cancer Studies is increasing its activities, and the PhD course *CCBIO903: Cancer research: Ethical, economic and social aspects* has been completed and was very well received by the participants.

At this point, I would like to call your attention to the 3rd CCBIO Annual Symposium (May 19-20, 2015) at Solstrand. We are opening the registration shortly, and we encourage you to register early since the capacity at Solstrand is limited. This is an open meeting so feel free to circulate the program also to colleagues and friends not directly affiliated with CCBIO.

Best regards, Lars A. Akslen, Director

New professor II at CCBIO: Arne Östman

CCBIO is honored by Östman's interest in this position. This will clearly strengthen the activities within CCBIO, related to both research and education.



Arne Östman is currently a top ranking internationally well renowned scientist within the field of Molecular Oncology. He has his main position as a professor at Karolinska Institutet which is ranked among the best medical research institutions in the world. He has documented a unique expertise in the biology of the tumor microenvironment with special focus on tu-

mor associated fibroblasts and their importance for cancer progression. He has published more than 120 scientific papers in renowned international journals, such as Nature, Nature Cell Biol, PNAS, J Biol Chem, Cancer Research, and Oncogene. Further, Östman has written many reviews and book chapters. He has successfully supervised a significant number of Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellows.

Östman is the coordinator of TARGET – a centre-of-excellence network on tumor stroma based at the Karolinska Institute. The centre is funded for 10 years by the Swedish Research Council. He is vice-coordinator of STRATCAN – a government funded initiative for the development of excellent cancer research at KI (2010-), and deputy head of the department from 2010.

We welcome Arne to the CCBIO family and look forward to a fruitful collaboration!

CCBIO's 3rd symposium

Make sure to save the date for CCBIO's 3rd Annual Symposium at Solstrand 19.-20. May!



Similarly to the symposium last year, this year's CCBIOs symposium will be a combination of invited international and national speakers and two long poster

sessions during which younger researchers can present their research. The selection of which participants that can present their posters will be done on the basis of the submitted abstracts.

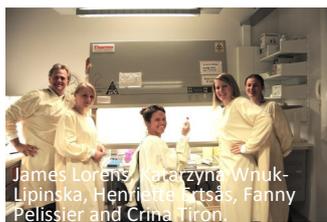
Among the international speakers you will this year find names such as Carl-Henrik Heldin, Jean Paul Thiery, Thomas Brabletz, David Tuveson, Arne Östman and Ravi Bhatia.

And did you know that Solstrand Hotel & Bad has been elected as Norway's best hotel by Tripadvisor?

The invitation and the tentative program with registration link and submitting abstracts will follow shortly, but we already now ask you to reserve the dates and wish you welcome to the 2015 CCBIO Symposium!

Pills against cancer

Medication that inhibit AXL effect is developed as pills and now in clinical trials.



James Lorens, Katarzyna Wnuk-Lipinska, Henriette Ertås, Fanny Pelissier and Crina Titon

BerGenBio recently started a trial with a cancer drug that has been developed on the basis of research results from CCBIO, more specifically the knowledge that cancer cells with much

AXL proteins behave more aggressively and become resistant to treatment. This discovery was first made by James Lorens, a professor at the University of Bergen and CCBIO. The developed drugs inhibit AXL action.

- This trial is unique in many ways, says Bjørn Tore Gjertsen, Senior Consultant and researcher/Professor at UiB/CCBIO. As far as I know, this is the first time in Norway that we administer pills against cancer to patients, developed by a Norwegian company. He continues: - It is also quite remarkable that we are doing a so-called Phase 1-trial on cancer in Norway at all. There are actually not more of those annually than countable on one hand.

Read more in [article in Bergens Tidende](#).



CCBIO at "Filosofisk Poliklinikk"

Filosofisk Poliklinikk - "The Philosophical Polyclinic" - a Norwegian think-tank for medical philosophy - featured CCBIO Director Lars Akslen in their public meeting in Bergen on the 4th February.

The meeting was one of a series of four on challenges of health prioritization.

In his public lecture called "Biomarkers and modern cancer treatment", Akslen gave an introduction to cancer biology and the principles of cancer treatment as well as the role of and need for biomarkers. He introduced the dilemmas emerging from the increasing costs of cancer treatments, as well as the role of pharmaceutical industry in this increase.

[Read more here.](#)

Should medical science alone decide what is good for society?

The first week of the PhD course 'CCBIO903: Cancer research: Ethical, economic and social aspects' was held January 19th to 22nd.



Roger Strand, John Cairns and Anne Blanchard. Photo: G.Løken

This course was led by a teaching team consisting of three people: John Cairns, Professor in health economics at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Professor Roger Strand and post-doctor Anne Blanchard, both at the Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities in Bergen. All three are affiliated to the CCBIO.

Over the first week, the following questions were discussed: How to model economic decisions to help choose between two drugs? How to economically evaluate changes between health states? Should medical science alone decide what is good for society, and what society needs? Which ethical theories are guiding us when we face dilemmas in medical practice? Why are the funds for cancer research increasing every year: is it because of hope or despair?

[Read more here.](#)

CCBIO Special Seminar: "Tumor plasticity and drug resistance"

CCBIO is proud to present a CCBIO Special Seminar April 8th with speakers Rik Thompson of Australia and John Haley of New York.

Title: "Tumor plasticity and drug resistance".
Time and place: 08.04.2015, 14-16.00, Aud. 4 BBB.
Host: James Lorens, CCBIO

Speakers are :



[Rik Thompson](#), Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation and School of Biomedical Sciences, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. [See more introduction here to Rik Thompson.](#)



[John D. Haley](#), Stony Brook School of Medicine New York, SBU Cancer Center and SBU Proteomics Center.

Apart from the interesting talks, the CCBIO seminars are a good way to meet CCBIO members and associates. Please feel free to circulate the invitation as all are welcome!

[See abstracts.](#)

Disputations from CCBIO

Ida Wiig Sørensen

Ida Wiig Sørensen defended 12.02.15 her PhD thesis «Molecular Characterisation of Integrin a 11 Function» at the University of Bergen.



Supervisors are Professor Donald Gullberg og Professor Marion Kusche-Gullberg.

Read more in [press release](#) (Norwegian only).

Katarzyna Wnuk-Lipinska

Katarzyna Wnuk-Lipinska defends 07.04.15 at 12.30 her PhD thesis «The role of Axl signaling in phenotypic plasticity in normal and neoplastic epithelial cells» at the University of Bergen.



Main supervisor is Professor James Lorens.

[Read more here.](#)

Next CCBIO seminar, Lorena Arranz

Remember the next CCBIO seminar with pizza get-together afterwards, Wednesday, April 30th, 14.30, Auditorium 4, BBB.



Speaker: **Researcher Lorena Arranz** from the Stem Cell Aging and Cancer Research Group, University of Tromsø, Norway's Arctic University.

International Conference, "The tumor stroma- friend or foe?", October 22-23

The Marie Curie ITN Network CAFFEIN, cafein.ku.dk, arranges it conclusive international conference in in Bergen 22nd-23rd October 2015.

The conference is titled "The tumor stroma- friend or foe?" and all are welcome to attend. The following international and national speakers have confirmed their attendance: [Eric Sahai](#), [Arne Östman](#), [Cedric Gaggioli](#), [Ryan Driskell](#), [Lars Akslen](#), [Bjørn-Tore Gjersten](#), [Marion Kusche-Gullberg](#), [Emmet McCormack](#), [Helga Salvesen](#).

Save the dates, further information will follow!

Recent publications



You can find the last publications [on this link.](#)

Recent CCBIO in the media

Date, media, title, person interviewed.

- 26.03.15, Dagens Medisin, "[3,4 millioner for én måneds behandling](#)", Bjørn Tore Gjertsen.
- 26.03.15, Dagens Medisin, "[Kan stå overfor paradigmeskifte](#)", Bjørn Tore Gjertsen.
- 21.03.15, NRK, "[Det verste var å vite at barna kanskje ikke ville huske meg](#)", Oddbjørn Straume, Lars Akslen.
- 20.03.15, Sunnmørsposten, "[Hver kreftsvulst skal få sin egen behandling.](#)", Lars Akslen.
- 06.02.15, Bergens Tidende, "[Jan Helge Johannesen er pionérpasient](#)", B.T. Gjertsen, James Lorens
- 19.01.15, På Høyden, "[Samfunnsansvar inn i virksomheten](#)", Roger Strand.

Good turnout at the CCBIO Seminars

Auditorium 4 was close to overfilled at the most recent CCBIO Seminar with speaker [Hani Gabra](#) from the Ovarian Cancer Action Research Centre, Department of Surgery and Cancer, Imperial College London, UK.

Title was "OPCML and the regulation of receptor tyrosine kinase network: Focus on AXL".



CCBIO Mini-biographies

Part II of presentation of CCBIO's junior researchers (PhDs and PDs). The aim is to increase knowledge about CCBIOs junior staff and their research focus, the latter also reflecting the research of CCBIOs various groups.

Sura Aziz: Born 1978 in Iraq, is a M.D. from Al Nahrain University of medicine in Iraq.



She is now a PhD candidate in the Akslen group. Her research project aims to identify new biomarkers in aggressive breast cancer with special focus on proliferation in metastases and the influence of the tumor microenvironment on the metastatic site.

Anna Berg: Born 1984, is a M.D. from UoB. In



2012 she started as a PhD candidate in the Salvesen group. In her PhD-project she has a focus on premalignant lesions in endometrial tissue, aiming to find biomarkers to improve diagnostics and to guide treatment strategies.

Even Birkeland: Born 1982, holds a M.S. in medical cell biology and finished in 2013 a PhD on genetic alterations in endometrial cancer, both at the UoB. He is now a post-doc in the Akslen group. His research interests are in the field of cancer proteomics, especially related to breast cancer subtypes and the tumor microenvironment.



Katharina Bischof: Born 1981 in Austria, M.D.



and now a PhD candidate in the Gjertsen group. Her research focus is on identifying biomarkers in ovarian cancer, which can predict response to standard chemotherapy regimens.

Anna Blois: Born 1977 in Italy, holds a M.S. in



Animal Physiology and a PhD in Cell Biology, both from the University of Calabria, Italy. She is currently a postdoc in the Akslen group. Her research is focused on breast cancer, aiming to explore the angiogenic profile of different breast cancer subtypes, and to provide novel angiogenesis markers and potential treatment targets.

Kjersti Tefre Davidsen: Born 1980, holds an



M.D. from the UoB and is currently doing her PhD project in the Lorens and Straume groups. She studies the Axl receptor and its involvement in therapy resistance in melanoma, aiming to inhibit Axl-dependent functions required for therapy resistance in Axlexpressing melanomas.

Caroline Engen: Born 1987, M.D. from UoB.



She is currently a PhD candidate in the Gjertsen group. In her project she aims to elucidate aspects of clonal heterogeneity and clonal evolution in acute myeloid leukemia, with specific focus on possible therapeutic implications.

Henriette Ertsås: Born 1974, holds a M.S. in



Virology from UoB and is currently a PhD candidate in the Lorens group. Her research goal is to understand how the microenvironment determines cell fate and tumor progression.

Rakel Forthun: Born 1983, holds an M.S. in medical cell biology from UoB and in 2012 received her PhD from UoB, focused on acute myelogen leukemia (AML). She is now a post-doc in the Gjertsen group working on predictive biomarkers for AML treatment, especially related to the drug valproat.



Gry Sandvik Haaland: Born 1982, M.D. from UoB, is currently doing her PhD in the Lorens group. Her research is focused on characterizing the receptor tyrosine kinase Axl, and its role in metastatic development, aiming to increase the knowledge about the receptor, its downstream effects on tumor cells, and to use this information in cancer treatment.



Stein Erik Gullaksen: Born 1986, holds a M.S. in Nanotechnology from UoB and is currently a PhD candidate in the Gjertsen group. He is exploring several different types of cellular stress, when applied to leukemic cells.



Mari Kylesø Halle: Born 1982, holds an M.S. in Molecular Biology from NMBU. She is now a PhD candidate in the Salvesen group, working on molecular changes occurring from primary endometrial cancer to metastatic disease.



Quang Trung Ha: Born 1982, M.D. from Vietnam, holds a M.S. in Medical Biology from UoB and is currently a PhD candidate in the Gjertsen group. His research focus is on developing p53-independent and p53-dependent novel therapies for the treatment of acute myeloid leukemia.



Sigrun Margrethe Hjelle: Born 1983, holds a M.S. in Medical Cell Biology from UoB and in 2013 completed a PhD at UoB, focused on the expression and function of p53 full-length, p53b and p53g protein isoforms in leukemia. She is now a post-doc in the Gjertsen group continuing her focus on p53 in acute myelogen leukemia and breast cancer using proteomics analysis and functional studies of p53 isoforms.

