

Press release – For immediate release

A science platform to combat brain metastases

Professor Awada awarded the Fonds Gaston Ithier Prize for Oncological Science

Brussels, 9 January 2018 – **This Thursday, 18 January, it was to Professor Ahmad Awada of the Jules Bordet Institute that the Fonds Gaston Ithier, dedicated to encouraging cancer research at the ULB, chose to officially award the prize for oncological science. This in recognition of his project for a clinical and translational research platform to optimise the diagnosis and treatment of brain metastases. A welcome and well deserved recognition for Professor Awada and his team who launched the project in June 2017.**

Why such a platform?

In recent years we have seen considerable progress in the systemic treatment of cancers, reflected in an improvement in the survival of patients suffering from a metastatic disease. However, we are also seeing an increase in the number of patients showing a brain metastasis, in most cases accompanied by a deterioration in quality of life and a poor prognosis. These metastases are particularly frequent in the case of breast cancer, lung cancer and melanoma.

The prognosis has certainly improved with locoregional treatment such as radiotherapy or removal surgery when possible but remains bleak once brain metastases are established and developing. Systemic treatment such as chemotherapy only rarely and temporarily achieves a satisfactory response in the case of brain metastases.

It is therefore vital to progress in our understanding, diagnosis and treatment of brain metastases. Any improvement in treating this pathology requires innovative and original approaches both in the fundamental and translational preclinical field and in the clinical field.

The project for a clinical and translational platform to optimise the diagnosis and treatment of brain metastases brings together multidisciplinary experts (oncologists, neurosurgeons, radiotherapists, scientists, pathologists, etc.) in the field of brain metastases who share the same innovative vision of research in meeting this challenge. This platform is coordinated by Dr Nuria Kotecki, a medical oncologist and member of Professor Ahmad Awada's team at the Jules Bordet Institute and Oncodistinct Executive Officer.

The platform's goals are essentially threefold

- Improved understanding of the changing epidemiology of brain metastases and the related risk factors
- Improved understanding of the biology of brain tumours with the creation of a dedicated tumour library.
- The study and development of innovative study protocols with particular emphasis on the primary prevention of brain metastases and their possible recurrence after initial treatment.

Platform development

Still very recent, the platform currently includes experts from the Jules Bordet Institute and the Erasmus Hospital but plans to broaden both nationally and internationally with the aid of the Oncodistinct network (www.oncodistinct.net), the international network initiated by the Jules Bordet Institute that brings together oncology research centres seeking to promote innovative approaches in the treatment of cancers.

Enclosed: Photo of Pr Ahmad Awada

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