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A EUROPE-WIDE CELL THERAPY UNIT TO IMAGINE TOMORROW'S TREATMENTS TODAY

Brussels, 27/04/2023 – **The new Hematological Cell Therapy Unit at the Jules Bordet Institute, now part of the Brussels University Hospital (H.U.B) together with the Erasmus Hospital and the Queen Fabiola University Children's Hospital, is celebrating its arrival on the campus of the ULB health pole. This pioneering unit is widening its collaborations and pushing back the boundaries of cell therapy to cure more patients from all backgrounds.**

The UTCH: pooling expertise from three institutions

The Hematological Cell Therapy Unit was created in 1981 within the Jules Bordet Institute with the aim of using highly innovative cell therapy to cure a growing number of patients. Since then and thanks to these precision therapies, the Unit has permitted major progress in treating rare cancers and orphan diseases. Pooling the skills and know-how of the hematological teams at the Brussels University Hospital, a grouping of the Jules Bordet Institute, the Erasmus Hospital and the Queen Fabiola University Children's Hospital, has served to strengthen our expertise in this field. After a first year at the new Jules Bordet Institute building, the Hematological Cell Therapy Unit has now been accredited by the National Medicines Agency for the use of modified cellular products. This major progress will make it possible to develop projects of increasingly practical implementation.

Cell transplants and cell therapy. What are they?

The human cells used in cell therapy have to be treated with the same care and standardisation as medicines. For the past 40 years cell therapy has been used in hematology to carry out bone marrow and stem cell transplants, that is, the transplanting of cells from which other blood cells develop (red and white corpuscles, platelets, etc.). These transplants make it possible to reconstitute a new immune system that is able to combat tumours. Cell therapy is today experiencing a genuine revolution as it expands into many other fields of medicine, such as immunotherapy to combat cancers that do not respond to chemotherapy, regenerative medicine and gene modification to cure rare diseases of the red blood corpuscles. It can also be used correct certain immune-related phenomena and to prevent the body from rejecting transplants of solid organs such as the liver or kidney. Treatment with Cart-T cells, which is the modification of white blood cells to recognise cancer cells, is also a promising form of therapy that could be produced locally. A breakthrough made possible thanks to the support of the Association Jules Bordet.

At the heart of the process: research to create tomorrow's treatments

The Hematological Cell Therapy Unit is the central link in a chain that begins with a conversation in the doctor's surgery when the patient discusses the treatment options. Upstream, there are sessions lasting several hours at an apheresis unit dedicated to collecting cells using very specific techniques. Downstream, the patient spends between several days and several weeks at a transplantation unit, the duration depending on the preparations required prior to treatment. Every day, the Cell Therapy Unit and Clinical Research work in close cooperation with the Institute laboratories, the campus laboratories and pharmaceutical partners to imagine and test tomorrow's treatments.

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ABOUT THE JULES BORDET INSTITUTE

An integrated multidisciplinary centre and unique in Belgium, the Jules Bordet Institute is an autonomous hospital dedicated exclusively to cancerous diseases.
For the past 80 years the Jules Bordet Institute has been offering its patients leading-edge diagnostic and therapeutic strategies in the prevention, screening and active treatment of cancer. The Institute pursues three missions: care, research and teaching. The Institution's international reputation attracts leading experts in the field of cancer. Its spirit of innovation has enabled it to participate in developing and discovering major new diagnostic and therapeutic strategies with the aim of bringing the benefits to the patient as quickly as possible.
In May 2018 the Jules Bordet Institute was officially awarded, for the second time, OECI (Organisation of European Cancer Institutes) accreditation and certification as a 'Comprehensive Cancer Centre', a quality label reserved for multidisciplinary cancer care institutions that include research and training. The Jules Bordet Institute is the only Comprehensive Cancer Centre accredited by the OECI in Belgium.
On 28 November 2021 the Jules Bordet Institute opened its new building on the ULB Anderlecht campus with 80,000 m^2 fully dedicated to leading-edge cancer care, research and training, as well as focusing on patient well-being. It offers 250 hospitalisation beds and 43 day hospitalisation beds.
The Jules Bordet Institute is also a part of the H.U.B., the Brussels University Hospital, which brings together the Erasmus Hospital, the Jules Bordet Institute and the HUDERF. This university hospital group of international renown guarantees, in particular thanks to these new investments, high quality care accessible to all and excellence in research and teaching.
www.bordet.be

ABOUT THE H.U.B

The Brussels University Hospital (H.U.B) is the Academic Hospital of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) that, since 2021, has brought together the Jules Bordet Institute, the Erasmus Hospital and the Queen Fabiola University Children's Hospital (HUDERF).

As a reference centre at international level, located at the heart of the Brussels Region, the H.U.B proposes general, oncological and paediatric care of the highest quality.

The excellence of care, accessible to all, is enriched and fuelled by scientific research and training of the nurses of the future. In 2022, the H.U.B had more than 6,000 staff committed to the following values: the Patient's Interests, Respect, Commitment, Solidarity, Diversity and Inclusion and Free Inquiry.

www.hubruxelles.be

ABOUT THE JULES BORDET ASSOCIATION

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For more than 50 years cancer research at the Bordet Institute has been inseparable from the Jules Bordet Association (formerly Friends of the Bordet Institute). As the Institute's principal private donor, in the past 50 years this non-profit association has donated more than 100 million euros to fund hundreds of research projects and to achieve major progress for the benefit of patients.
True to its mission, the Jules Bordet Association has already made available 18 million euros for the deployment of research activities at the new hospital, including almost 6 million euros to enable the Bordet Institute to acquire the 1.5 Tesla MRI-Linac and the simulation MRI.
To find out more about the Jules Bordet Association, visit the website at web www.association-jules-bordet.be

ABOUT THE UTCH

On several occasions in the course of its history the UTCH has played a pioneering role. It was, for example, one of the first to carry out haploidentical transplants, one of the first in Belgium to integrate a cytapheresis unit in its functioning and one of the first to obtain umbilical cord blood bank accreditation and to develop protocols for children. Following the move to the New Bordet and thanks to investments by the Bordet Institute and the support of the Jules Bordet Association, the Hematological Cell Therapy Unit (UTCH) is today in a position to further develop its platform. Already JACIE accredited, the UTCH is now aiming for international GMP qualifications to further widen its spectrum of possibilities for the benefit of patients. The Hematological Cell Therapy Unit also offers vital expertise for implementing and developing innovative treatment for patients of the three hospitals that constitute the Brussels University Hospital and of the ULB network, not only in cellular immunotherapy but also in gene therapy through its international partnerships, for adults but in future more intensely for children as efficient and secure protocols are developed.