

Launch of OncoSTART consortium supporting oncology entrepreneurs

Twelve expert partners join forces and combine networks to drive entrepreneurial innovation against cancer

Bordeaux, France, May 31, 2021 — Created at the initiative of MATWIN, the French accelerator dedicated to oncology innovation, the [OncoSTART](#) consortium brings together 12 key national players in research and innovation in the fight against cancer, pooling their specific expertise, know-how and networks. This new group aims to drive the creation of high added-value start-ups in the oncology sector and support the development of a network with a more visible international presence to better cater to patients' needs.

The OncoSTART steering committee currently has 12 members:

- Cancer research clusters (cancéropôles) : CLARA (Canceropole Lyon Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes), Sud (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur), Grand-Ouest (Brittany, Centre, Pays de la Loire) and Nord-Ouest (Normandy, Hauts de France)
- The Carnot Institutes specifically targeting cancer: Curie Cancer, CALYM for lymphomas and OPALE for leukemia and related diseases
- The Cancer Campus biocluster
- The Gustave Roussy Comprehensive Cancer Center
- The MATWIN innovation accelerator (the consortium's coordinator)
- LS LEAD training center (Life Science Leadership School)
- The Unicancer hospital network

The Covid health crisis demonstrated that many biotechnology companies spun off from academic research have the ability to offer disruptive innovations (vaccines, tests, etc.). Oncology is a good example of this trend, with recent developments by early-stage businesses in the areas of immunotherapy, CAR-T cells, e-health and artificial intelligence. Given that start-up creation is a key marker of the ecosystem's capacity for innovation, the OncoSTART consortium has chosen to promote and support these ventures to accelerate and strengthen the development of innovations for the benefit of patients.

"France offers some real advantages when it comes to cancer research: excellent academic research, a burgeoning network and a high level of activity in innovation, all thanks largely to more than 20 years of substantial public sector support; though it is still difficult to convert these results into practical applications for patients," said Lucia Robert, CEO of MATWIN. "OncoSTART provides an opportunity to build bridges between players, creating a more efficient oncology innovation ecosystem for everyone, starting with project owners and developers, and over time extending this to patients."

OncoSTART is open to all types of project owners (postgraduates, early-career researchers, aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs). Its cross-functional approach provides access to a continuum of activities intended to raise awareness, deliver training and accelerate entrepreneurial projects in the field. The scheme operates as a toolbox, enabling tailored responses that cater for the specific needs of each project owner. It also capitalizes on the link-up between a number of existing support programs.

"We need to support entrepreneurial culture. OncoSTART's vision is to show that we will be there for anyone who takes up the challenge," said Jean-Yves Blay, President of Unicancer. "Unicancer is proud to be part of this collective, coordinated by its MATWIN subsidiary. This will provide a boost for a sector where players share common values around cancer innovation."

Cancer is still a major global health issue. More than 19M patients were diagnosed in 2020; with close to 10M deaths. The associated costs of the disease are significant in both individual and collective terms. By 2040, the WHO estimates that 30M patients will be diagnosed each year. In France, cancer is the 3rd health expense and represents 10% of public health insurance expenditure (with an increase of 48% since 2004, mainly due to a rising incidence)- Source: <https://gco.iarc.fr/>

About OncoSTART members

- Over the last 12 years, [MATWIN](#), a fully owned subsidiary of Unicancer, has run the only national accelerator program exclusively for innovation in oncology. Open to European teams from academia and start-ups, MATWIN is based on a longstanding partnership with 13 international companies active in oncology and keen to identify early-stage, high-potential projects with therapeutic or diagnostic applications: Amgen, AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Exact Sciences, Gilead, GlaxoSmithKline, Nanostring Technologies, Novartis, Pfizer, Pierre Fabre, Roche and Sanofi. Since it was founded, MATWIN has connected with all the players in the ecosystem (technology transfer offices, incubators, clusters, etc.) to maximize the value of oncology innovation. Given its national positioning, responsibility for coordination of OncoSTART lies with MATWIN.
- [Unicancer](#) is the only French hospital network entirely devoted to fighting cancer. It groups together the 18 French Comprehensive Cancer centers (FCCc) which are private, non-profit hospitals. Unicancer is also the leading academic promoter of oncology clinical trials in Europe.
- **The Cancer Research clusters (Canceropoles)**, established in 2003 by the first French Cancer Plan, enable at regional or inter-regional levels a better coordination of skills and resources while removing the barriers between sectors and disciplines. They bring together the scientific, clinical and industrial communities and offer training, support and funding, up to proof-of-concept validation for some canceropoles. The following Cancer Research clusters are currently involved in OncoSTART: [CLARA](#) (covering Lyon Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes), [Sud](#) (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur), [Grand-Ouest](#) (Brittany, Centre, Pays de la Loire) and [Nord-Ouest](#) (Normandy, Hauts de France).
- [Gustave Roussy](#): Leading Cancer Centre in Europe, Gustave Roussy is a global centre of expertise entirely dedicated to cancer patients. A leader in therapeutic innovations and major diagnostic advances, the institute welcomes nearly 50,000 patients each year and develops an integrated approach combining research, care and training. Expert in rare and complex tumours, Gustave Roussy treats patients with all types of cancer at any age.
- **The [Curie Cancer](#), [CALYM](#) and [OPALE Carnot Institutes](#)**: These three entities offer industry players the opportunity to collaborate on research, ranging from far-upstream cognitive research right downstream to clinical research and industrial/medical application, either within an institution (Institut Curie for Curie Cancer) or in a particular field (lymphoma for CALYM, leukemia and related diseases for OPALE).
- [Cancer Campus](#): As part of its mission to raise awareness and expand business creation, the Greater Paris Cancer Campus biocluster in Villejuif has launched in 2014 two national programs specifically to support oncology entrepreneurs. These programs, 'OncoEntrepreneur' and 'Onconumérique' [Oncodigital], provide more than 60 hours of tailor-made training and support for start-up projects in the areas of biotech, medtech, e-health and digital oncology.
- [LS LEAD](#): Founded in 2016, LS LEAD (Life Science Leadership School) provides innovative certification training especially for professionals in the field of life sciences. The school offers over 40 training days delivered by more than 80 sector professionals, covering operational and management topics specific to life sciences. LS LEAD can also offer access to a network of experts and partners to support project development.

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