

GSCN Travel Award: European Hematology Association form 12th to 15th of June in Milan, Italy

It is with sincere gratitude that I acknowledge receiving the GSCN Travel Grant this year. This support made it possible for me to attend the European Hematology Association (EHA) Congress in Milan – an event that proved highly enriching both scientifically and personally.

The conference, which drew over 10,000 participants and featured more than 4,000 submitted abstracts, offered an unparalleled platform for scientific exchange and networking. I had the privilege of presenting my own research in a poster session on Saturday evening. My project, entitled "*Improving CAR T cell therapy against PDAC by generation of VHH-derived binders*", attracted considerable interest and generated valuable feedback. Several discussions sparked new ideas that I am eager to implement in the near future.

Particularly insightful were the sessions focusing on recent developments in CAR T cell therapies. A highlight was the presentation by Professor Carl June, who detailed innovative strategies to both expedite CAR T cell production from seven to three days and enhance their function. Furthermore, it was very interesting to see that his group has engineered CAR T cells to secrete interleukin-18, a concept known as armoring, which holds great promise for overcoming tumor microenvironmental resistance.

Equally impactful were the talks by Dr. Sara Ghorashian and Dr. Marie José Kersten. Dr. Ghorashian's presentation on the clinical application of CAR T cells in acute myeloid leukemia (AML) offered a detailed view of current translational efforts, while Dr. Kersten provided a fascinating overview of emerging toxicities associated with novel immunotherapies, such as cytokine release syndrome and immune effector cell-associated neurotoxicity syndrome. These discussions deepened my understanding of the balance between therapeutic efficacy and safety in immunotherapies.

In addition to the scientific sessions, the opportunity to engage in direct conversations with leading experts, including a personal exchange with Professor June, underscored the value of in-person meetings. These spontaneous interactions often prove to be the most inspiring and influential moments of a conference.

In conclusion, attending the European Hematology Association Congress was a profoundly rewarding experience. It expanded my scientific horizons, catalyzed meaningful professional connections, and provided critical insights that will directly impact my ongoing research. I am truly grateful to the GSCN for making this opportunity possible.

Sincerely,

Alexander Seitz