



Press release

23.09.2014

Research Center for Infection Medicine opened

Excellent conditions for infection researchers

After 2.5 years of construction, today the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover Foundation (TiHo) opened the state-of-the-art Research Center for Emerging Infections and Zoonoses (RIZ) at the Bünteweg campus in Kirchrode. The entire construction was jointly funded by the state and federal governments with a total of 37 million euros.

Initially, only one of the two areas of the building will be put into operation. The infection researchers have 40 laboratories comprising 2000 square meters of usable area. The second area will be moved into next year. The main focus of their research will be infection diseases that are transmissible between humans and animals. We live closely contact with animals. Under the one-health concept, it is only reasonable to research infection diseases that equally threaten animals and humans. A majority of the infection diseases belongs this group, known as zoonoses. Approximately three-quarters of all pathogens can infect both humans and animals, said TiHo president Dr. Gerhard Greif during the opening ceremony. Infection research has been a central research focus at TiHo for many years.

The researchers in the RIZ will work with different pathogen types, including viruses and bacteria as well as parasites as vectors. All are known to cause infection diseases in humans and animals. To control these diseases, researchers will investigate how pathogens are transmitted, what happens during infection in the body of a human or animal or the molecular mechanisms on which the infections are based. The aim is always to develop new treatment possibilities or prevention strategies for animals and humans. So we always follow a translational approach, said Greif. The work at RIZ will be divided into three areas based on their focus: food-borne, vector-borne and emerging infection diseases.

Andrea Hoops, State Secretary in the Lower Saxony Ministry for Science and Culture said: With its innovative research approaches and a very well thought-out methodology, the TiHo represents a crucial factor for life sciences research in Lower Saxony. Their bridges between medicine for animals and humans are impressive. Particularly for infection diseases, we need new approaches to improve treatment of these diseases.

The TiHo is breaking new ground with the RIZ. The building will not be permanently occupied by fixed working groups as is typical, but is available as research center for collaborations for all researchers at TiHo as well as national and international institutions and researchers.

As founding director, Professor Dr. Albert D.M.E. Osterhaus assumes the management of the new research center and will coordinate the projects ongoing at the RIZ. The RIZ is unique among university facilities. It offers state-of-the-art possibilities for infection researchers with excellent equipment for basic and applied research, said Osterhaus. Researchers can work in S2 and S3 laboratories in the RIZ.

In order to further strengthen the research capabilities of TiHo in the field of infection medicine, the available professorships will be advertised for specific target candidates. Currently, the TiHo is looking for professors for seven new fields: vector-borne infection diseases, genetics and bioinformatics of infection diseases, infection immunology, infection biochemistry, food-borne pathogens, viral zoonoses/influenza and identification and characterization of new viral pathogens.

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Dieses PDF-Dokument wurde dynamisch auf www.tiho-hannover.de erstellt.

Letzte Aktualisierung dieses Dokumentes: 11. February 2016

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