

Young Oncology Academy: Curriculum

1. Background

Clinical cancer research is a vital aspect of cancer care and of high priority to the patients in Switzerland. It allows them access to the newest treatment options and helps to improve the standard of care. However, clinical cancer research is time consuming and complex and must be provided by interested and motivated researchers. Since there is a constantly decreasing number of care-takers who face an ever-increasing number of cancer patients' identification and support of young talents is of utmost importance.

Key components for academic success, besides talent and ambition, are:

- Strategic networking and acquisition and processing of knowledge,
- Presentation skills: of a project or a completed trial, and the critical discussion of its strengths and weaknesses
- Interaction with local, national, and international peers, members of a multidisciplinary team and basic researchers and forming collaborations with these professionals,
- Writing and successfully publishing a manuscript or grant proposal,
- Conduct of studies including the interpretation of statistical models
- Active mentorship and employer commitment (protected research time)

To meet these challenges, the Swiss Cancer Institute has created the Young Oncology Academy, supporting young oncologists in their career development and ensuring the future of clinical research in Switzerland.

2. Scope

This program identifies and trains young oncologists to become active players in clinical and translational research, teaches them how to take responsibility for a trial and how to successfully run and publish a study.

3. Program components

The program proposal is aimed at the following six components.

3.1. Congress Participation

Each participant attends one major congress (either ESTRO, EHA, ESP, or ESMO) aligned with their specialty.

- **April–July:** Mentor guidance to compile a personal congress program and plan travel (expenses - travel, congress participation, accommodation - reimbursed up to CHF 1,200, according to the SCI guidelines).
- **May–October:** Attendance at congresses (ESTRO in May, EHA in June, ESP in September, ESMO in October).

Participants will focus on one of the more common cancer types, for which they attend at least the proffered paper sessions. They prepare the meeting program with the support of the mentor, and they should attempt to participate in all types of sessions: presidential symposia, educational sessions, poster discussions, poster presentations, controversy sessions, young oncologist masterclass, etc.

3.2. Presentation skills

- **Training (June):**
The participants will take part in a 1.5-day presentation skills course to learn and improve their presentation skills.

- **Preparation (October):**
With mentor support, participants prepare a 15-minute presentation in English on Congress highlights in their selected focus
- **Delivery (November, 2x):**
First presentation in front of the mentors and peers. The presentations will be commented on both style and content, then revised for the presentation at the Swiss Cancer Institute's Semi-Annual meeting during the SOHC in Basel in the respective Project Group

3.3. Networking

- **Integration (May – September):**
Participants are invited to the Swiss Cancer Institute Project Group in-between meetings and continuing education events (e.g. Onko-Lunches)
- **Formal Introduction (November):**
Participants are introduced as members of the Young Oncology Academy to Project Groups at SOHC Basel.
- **Ongoing (from 2027):**
Regular invitations to Project Group meetings, including participation in the Core Groups for one year.

3.4. Writing skills

- **Course (August):**
2-day "How-to-Write a Scientific Paper" course at Winterthur Cantonal Hospital.
- **Output (October – November):**
Each participant writes a one-page review paper on congress highlights, reviewed by mentors and submitted by November 21 for publication in journals.

3.5. Basic Statistic and Trial development

- **Course (April or May):**
One-day course covering trial design, endpoints, power, p-values, Kaplan–Meier plots, hazard ratios. Includes workshop to design trial proposals.
- **Future Opportunity (within 2 years)**
Encouragement to attend the ECCO-AACR-EORTC-ESMO workshop on clinical cancer research methods with a Swiss Cancer Institute project proposal. Successful graduates may be offered PI positions with senior PI support on future Swiss Cancer Institute trials.

3.6. Course on Grant Submission and Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

- **Course (May or June)**
One day module covering:
 - Practical guidance on preparing competitive grant applications
 - Structuring proposals, aligning with funding requirements
 - Engaging stakeholders to enhance relevance and impact
 - Understanding the relevance of PPI and its role in study-development, study-conduct, and outcome dispersion

By the end of the program, each mentee will have:

- Delivered two professional presentations
- Written and published a review paper
- Completed multiple skill-building courses (**presentation, writing, statistics & trial development, grant submission**)
- Built a strong network **within Swiss Cancer Institute**
- Prepared for future leadership roles **in clinical and translational oncology research**

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