

# Informati -- on

Ascenion Information  
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## No, it's not primarily about money

What's it all about then? We talked to Dr Sara Matt-Leubner, the former President of the European professional association ASTP-Proton and her newly elected successor, Dr Christian Stein, about the aims of academic technology transfer and the direction the association is taking.

### Why do we need academic technology transfer?

**Matt-Leubner:** To ensure that promising results from publicly funded research lead to new products benefitting the general population. This – and nothing else – is the whole point of our work. But the current debate shows that we have yet to reach a consensus between research, politics, industry and technology transfer organizations on this subject.

### You mention the debate: is it not then, as so often the case, also a matter of money?

**Stein:** It's to do with money to the extent that when we negotiate with industry we seek fair remuneration for the research institutes in return for what they deliver. But it's not appropriate to make the income from technology transfer the prime indicator of its success.

### How can you measure success, then?

**Matt-Leubner:** By the quality of the technology transfer itself: the state of advancement of projects and the funding secured are just two important parameters. The number and quality of licensing agreements and start-ups, or the number of new products and jobs created, are also crucial. Measuring parameters such as these is no trivial matter, and is therefore an important part of our work.

### Why is it so important?

**Stein:** It helps clarify our goal, and this has a fundamental impact on how we work. Take translation and transfer instruments, for example. If we want to start earning as soon as possible, our current instruments are adequate. If we want to support an implementation in the long-term, we need



**Dr Sara Matt-Leubner**  
Immediate Past President ASTP-Proton

**Dr Christian Stein**  
President ASTP-Proton

instruments that reduce the implementation risk. That is, we need more possibilities for developing academic projects further before we pass them on to industry. We want to promote this way of thinking and develop new solutions together with government policy makers.

### **Does this mean that industry is not so important for your work in the first instance?**

**Matt-Leubner:** Not at all. But we want to reach the important milestones in early project development, as seen from the academic and public-sector points of view, ourselves. It's true that we need to know at a very early stage where and how these projects can gain access to industry. For this reason we want to increase the number of industry representatives in the association and get them more interested in our work. This is essential for technology transfer.

### **Have you something new to offer your existing members?**

**Stein:** Yes, of course. On the one hand, we are extending our professional development programme. We see this as a multistage process. Now that we have successfully established the certification process, we will tackle the next step: an in-depth qualification with a testing or examination component.

In parallel, we are developing a new service for technology transfer offices (TTOs) that we call 'peer review by critical friends'. The basic idea is as follows: directors can have their TTO thoroughly checked out over a two-day period by experienced colleagues that they choose from a defined pool.

The feedback from our pilot project was extremely positive. It provides the chance to obtain well-founded and practical advice regarding the further professionalization of your own organization without exposing yourself too much. We want to provide the service at as low a price as possible – i.e. at cost price.

### **Will the TTOs receive certification after such a peer review?**

**Matt-Leubner:** This doesn't make sense from our point of view. The individual circumstances of the TTOs are so varied, that it would not be possible to define a generally valid standard. Our peer review is intended as a service for our members and not as a preliminary to certification. The advantage is that those TTOs participating in peer review are not tempted to paint a perfect picture of themselves, as there is no risk of them losing any grants or funding. It's a purely internal, voluntary optimization process that offers the chance of development through constructive criticism.

### **How can your clients, the research institutes, benefit from this?**

**Stein:** Our mission overlaps to a great extent with that of our clients, the academic research institutes. They want their research results to help solve urgent problems in science, the economy and society. This is exactly what we are working towards – primarily through increasing quality and professionalism in technology transfer. The sound training and experience of our staff and the professional organization of TTOs are what enables us to provide our clients with the best possible service.

## **ASTP-Proton**

The European technology transfer association ASTP-Proton arose last year through a merger between the Association of Science and Technology Professionals (ASTP) and ProTon-Europe. It has nearly 900 members from 450 institutions.

Dr Sara Matt-Leubner, CEO of transidee, successfully led the new association through its first year of existence. As 'Immediate Past President', she will be working closely with Dr Christian Stein, CEO of Ascenion and new President as of November, in order to further shape the association's work.

A particular focus remains the recognition and professional training of those involved in technology transfer. To this end, the association has created, in close cooperation with the globally active Alliance for Technology Transfer Professionals (ATTP), a certification process for individual technology transfer professionals. Around 200 individuals have already been certified as Registered Technology Transfer Professionals (RTTPs), and a further 15 to 20 colleagues are joining them each quarter.



## Spin-offs in the Spotlight

### Berlin Cures: Novel treatment targeting the cause of heart failure

Berlin Cures, the first joint spin-off of the Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin (Charité) and the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC) Berlin-Buch has been launched. The company is developing a new causal treatment for chronic heart failure.

#### Targeting autoantibodies

The basis of the treatment is an aptamer: a short oligonucleotide chain that binds highly specifically to particular autoantibodies, removing them from the patient's blood. As shown by scientists at the MDC and the Charité during many years of research, these antibodies are implicated in the development of the disease and are detectable in the blood of around 70% of patients.

#### Head start for Berlin Cures

It has been known for a number of years that eliminating the autoantibody leads to a long-term improvement in patient health. However, this was achieved by means of a blood washing procedure that, due to its cost and complexity, is rarely used. 'Administering the aptamer is far simpler and more elegant,' says Dr Johannes Müller, co-founder and CEO of Berlin Cures. 'Furthermore, we know from clinical trials in which the same aptamer was used, but in a completely different context, that it is very well tolerated. This makes our project all the more promising and exciting.'

#### A chance for many

Chronic heart failure affects around 1.8 million people in Germany alone, with 200,000 to 300,000 new cases each year. 'It would be of huge benefit to a large number of people if Berlin Cures' approach is confirmed in clinical practice,' comments Dr Christian Stein, CEO of Ascenion. The project is all the more exciting, as the same aptamer could potentially be used in other therapy areas – that is, in all diseases where autoantibodies to G-protein-coupled receptors play a role, including certain lung and neurological diseases.

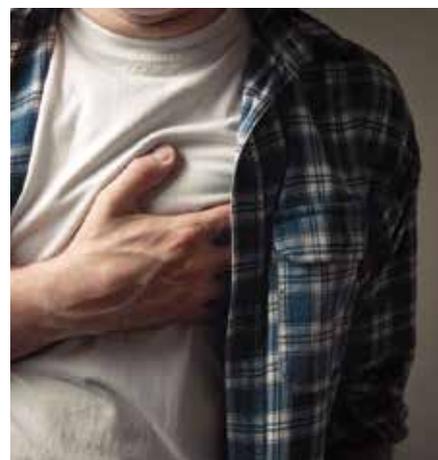
#### Swiss investors

The start-up has been able to secure financing from the Swiss company Minerva Partners AG, and has been founded under Swiss law. A subsidiary GmbH in Berlin conducts the research and development and coordinates the drug approval process.

Berlin Cures plans to extend its team by the end of the year, in order to press ahead with preclinical development. Phase I/IIa clinical trials are expected to begin mid-2015.

#### Equity for Ascenion

Ascenion, the technology transfer partner of the Charité and the MDC, is delighted that the licensing agreements were finalized so quickly in close cooperation with all parties, and that the investment structure was drafted so rapidly, thanks to Minerva Partners AG. In the process Ascenion, as technology transfer partner, has acquired shares in Berlin Cures. Any resulting profits flow to the LifeScience Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Research and are made available to the originating institutes to fund further research.



#### The role of antibodies in heart failure

Autoantibodies bind to  $\beta$ 1-adrenergic receptors on heart cells that are usually stimulated by adrenalin in order to raise the heartbeat as required – for example during sport or in stressful situations.

In contrast to adrenalin, which only stimulates heart muscle when physiologically required, the autoantibodies stimulate heart activity continually – completely independently of the actual requirement. This eventually damages heart muscle, the quality of life of those affected is reduced, and the risk of cardiac arrest rises significantly.

[www.berlincures.de](http://www.berlincures.de)

## Networks

Review

#### BioJapan: Attractive mid-tier businesses

BioJapan attracts many biopharmaceutical companies looking to fill their pipeline with innovative projects. For Ascenion this represents a valuable opportunity to forge and strengthen contacts with potential licensees in Asia. 'Mid-tier companies are an interesting target group for our partners' technologies,' comments Dr Christian Stein, CEO of Ascenion, summing up this year's meeting that took place from 15 – 17 October in Yokohama.



'There are many exciting companies with turnovers in the one- and double-digit billion euro range that to a large extent do business exclusively in the Asian region, and that we want to address more specifically in future.'

### **Technology transfer workshop: By experts, for experts**

On 20 and 21 November, 11 technology transfer representatives from Ascenion's partner institutes gathered at the Munich headquarters. The participants brought each other up to speed on developments and swapped experiences in a series of intensive workshops and discussions regarding, for example, different translation tools. External experts provided further impulses, reporting on current developments after the Myriad and Prometheus rulings and on changes to the European State Aid Rules.

Once again, the participants were asked to come up with topics and questions that concern them in technology transfer in time for next year's workshop. 'Then we can be sure that the meeting exactly addresses the needs of our partner institutes,' says Dr Susanne Letzelter, coordinator of the event at Ascenion.

Please send suggestions to: [letzelter@ascenion.de](mailto:letzelter@ascenion.de)



Preview

### **Biotech NetWorkshop: Ideas meet experience**

Ascenion and Max Planck Innovation invite entrepreneurs and scientists hoping to found a company to the 9th Biotech NetWorkshop on the 15 – 16 April in Tutzing. The event boasts a high level of commitment from the participating company executives and investors. Seven managers offer individual coaching sessions for company founders as part of the Entrepreneur's Academy on the first day of the meeting. A further 10 leading figures from industry and venture capital share their experiences in the areas of teambuilding and leadership, marketing and communication, and financing. The workshop provides an opportunity for intensive, honest exchanges that not only allow participants to forge valuable contacts, but also give them practical insights and tips. For example, in the session entitled 'Money', in addition to learning about the usual financing strategies, you can also hear from one speaker on 'Dirty Little Tricks in Equity Deals' – straight from the horse's mouth. The workshop takes place in the Evangelische Akademie in Tutzing on Lake Starnberg, Germany. Participant numbers for the Biotech NetWorkshop are limited and places will be given on a first come, first served basis. We advise those interested to register as soon as possible so that we can optimize the matching of coaches to coachees. The meeting will be held in German.



Further information and registration at [biotech-networkshop.de](http://biotech-networkshop.de), or contact Stanislava Zollner: [zollner@ascenion.de](mailto:zollner@ascenion.de)

## **Christmas greeting**

Dear Partners and Clients,

We thank you for the enjoyable and fruitful teamwork over the past year, and wish you and your families a merry Christmas and all the best for 2015!

Instead of sending Christmas cards this year, we have decided to make a donation to a public awareness campaign aimed at stopping the spread of Ebola in Liberia. There remains considerable mistrust in the Liberian population about the existence of Ebola, and this has prompted aid workers and film makers to develop short educational films in close cooperation with doctors and those affected. Using mobile film screenings, the campaign hopes to reach as many people as possible in Liberian villages.

You can find more information about the project here: [www.freunde-liberias.de](http://www.freunde-liberias.de)

Your Ascenion Team



## BioVaria: New impulses for your portfolio

Together with leading European technology transfer organizations, Ascenion is currently preparing the 8th BioVaria, which will take place on 11 May 2015. Once again, industry representatives and investors from all over the world can find on one single day the most promising licensable technologies emerging from Europe's publicly funded life-science research. 'Industry is permanently on the lookout for innovation,' says Esther Lange, the BioVaria coordinator at Ascenion.

For this reason, BioVaria is now a permanent fixture in the schedules of many biotech and pharma companies. It is, after all, the only event that brings together so many high-quality technologies from such a wide range of research institutes. 'We are constantly working to increase even further the quality and range of our portfolio, for example through a rigorous selection process for the new technologies and by acquiring new partners. This is our key to success,' continues Esther Lange. What began 8 years ago as a national technology platform, has thus become a central European marketplace. Lange is currently in discussions with several technology transfer organizations in Southern and Eastern Europe who will contribute new impulses for 2015.

BioVaria will once again feature the Spin-off Panel. Selected start-ups from all over Europe give an interactive presentation to a jury of experienced investors and industry representatives. The most convincing start-up in terms of its team, technology and business concept will receive the 'BioVaria Spin-off Award 2015'.

For more information regarding participation or supporting BioVaria as a partner or sponsor, please contact Esther Lange: [lange@ascenion.de](mailto:lange@ascenion.de)



**BioVaria**  
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[www.BioVaria.org](http://www.BioVaria.org)

Apply now for the  
'BioVaria Spin-off Award 2015'.  
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## News in Brief

### Team

#### Welcome to Hanover



Carolin Jahnke joined Ascenion's Hanover team in September 2014 to provide patent management support. As qualified legal secretary, she is responsible for monitoring deadlines and the patenting budget, assists with legal correspondence and manages office administration.

#### New director in Berlin



Dr Elisabeth von Weizsäcker is Director at Ascenion's Berlin office since November 2014, responsible for and guiding all its technology transfer activities, including those for the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine Berlin-Buch, the Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin and the German Rheumatism Research Centre Berlin. Dr von Weizsäcker, who has a PhD in molecular biology and is a former management consultant and company founder, joined Ascenion's Berlin office in 2012, rapidly establishing a good relationship with clients and gaining their appreciation. 'Our partner institutes here in the region have much to offer,' says Elisabeth von Weizsäcker. 'And Ascenion has a first-rate team. Together we can do a great deal for technology transfer, and I am looking forward to securing the continuity and quality of our work for our partners here as Director.'

### Meet Us

ASTP-Proton Training Course  
21 – 23 January 2015  
Barcelona, Spain

AUTM 2015 Annual Meeting  
22 – 25 February 2015  
New Orleans, USA

Biotech NetWorkshop  
15 – 16 April 2015  
Tutzing, Germany

Deutsche Biotechnologietage  
22 – 23 April 2015  
Cologne, Germany

BioVaria 2015  
11 May 2015  
Munich, Germany

## botiss dental acquires licence for self-degrading implant



Ascenion has negotiated a licensing agreement for a joint invention of the Hannover Medical School (MHH) and the Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Technology and Advanced Materials IFAM. Scientists from the two institutions have developed a new process for the production of magnesium implants that are self-degradable at a pre-set speed.

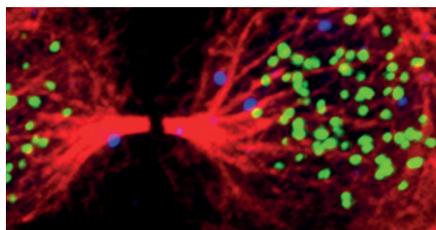
The key advantage: the new procedure works without the use of toxic salts that can lead to undesirable residues. The resulting alloy is therefore better tolerated. The licensing partner, the Berlin company botiss biomaterials, will initially use the method based on this new process to develop implants for oral and maxillofacial surgery, and possibly subsequently for orthopaedic surgery.

## MoBiTec offers DNA vectors for kinetochore proteins

Scientists investigating cell division and other functions of the cell nucleus now have access to a rich spectrum of DNA vectors encoding various different kinetochore proteins. MoBiTec GmbH, a molecular biotechnology company in Göttingen, recently acquired commercialization rights for these vectors

from the Leibniz Institute for Age Research – Fritz Lipmann Institute (FLI). Ascenion negotiated the licensing agreement. MoBiTec will initially be offering a selection of around 100 key vectors, subsequently extending its range according to demand. Scientists at the FLI have constructed more than 4,000 fusion variants and mutations of the approximately 100 human kinetochore proteins, histones and chaperones. These DNA vectors could be relevant in a wide range of research projects concerning cell division and other process in the cell nucleus.

Further information at: <http://www.mobitec.com/cms/news/index.html#vectornews>



## Technology transfer for the DZL

Over 200 leading scientists and their teams from 22 university and non-university institutes work together at the German Center for Lung Research (DZL). Their goal is to develop together new approaches to the prevention, diagnosis and therapy of serious lung diseases. Translating these approaches into medical practice is part of their mission.

To this end, a consortium has been set up to coordinate the work of the technology transfer partners of all institutes involved right from the beginning. The consortium is chaired by Dr Peter Stumpf and Dr Christian

Stein, the CEOs of TransMIT and Ascenion, respectively. Representing the DZL are its Spokesman, Werner Seeger, and Annegret Zurawski, Managing Director of BREATH, a coordinating center of the DZL.



## Impressum

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## Technology offers

[TO 15-00337](#) Circulating microRNAs for diagnosis of takotsubo cardiomyopathy

[TO 15-00356](#) Analysis of myostatin in serum

[TO 15-00358](#) COAT – an exceptionally efficient tumor vaccination approach

[TO 15-00366](#) Long non-coding RNA (lncRNA) LIPCAR predicts survival in heart failure patients

[TO 15-00371](#) lncRNAs as new diagnostics for disease related angiogenesis

[TO 32-00003](#) Applicator for medical thermotherapy

[TO 32-00005](#) Ultrasound palpator

[TO 32-00011](#) Prediction of therapy response to MTX in patients with rheumatoid arthritis