

University of Latvia will host a week long International gastric cancer prevention forum

The International gastric cancer prevention research forum, organized by the Institute of Clinical and Preventive Medicine of the University of Latvia (UL), will take place in February 19-23. It will bring together leading European experts and representatives from countries with high levels of gastric cancer, as well as representatives from international professional and patient organizations. During the week, various topical issues related to research on gastric cancer prevention will be discussed, the projects implemented in Latvia will be presented and opportunities for future cooperation with foreign partners will be discussed.

Over the last decades, the world has unreasonably ignored gastric cancer mortality problems, mainly because of the low incidence of cancer in the Western world and its continuous decline for many years. Some years ago, experts from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) came to this conclusion. This is important, in particular, because the total number of newly diagnosed patients in the world is almost one million people a year and will not change in the foreseeable future. Besides, the problem will grow also in the Western countries, along with population migration and refugee flows.

In regards to the incidence of stomach cancer, joining the European Union (EU) and NATO has not helped Latvia and the other Baltic States; we are still a high risk region, slightly lagging behind Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. The Eastern European region ranks right after world's highest risk areas in East Asia - Korea, Japan, parts of China, although the prevalence of risk factors in Russia and Latvia is higher than Japan and Korea.

A year ago, the Joint Action of the EU states CanCon (from Cancer Control - Cancer Control) was completed. The governments of the EU Member States were presented with results. Among other things, it was concluded that the proper decision on the implementation of prevention measures for gastric cancer in Europe requires further research. For several years now, in Latvia, together with researchers from the University of Latvia Clinical and Preventive Medicine Institute and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the only such study in Europe (GISTAR) has been conducted. The results of the study are expected by many specialists in Europe and beyond.

European experts (gastroenterologists, pathologists, epidemiologists, basic science representatives) who have agreed to participate in the GISTAR study Data Safety and Monitoring Committee (DSMB) will gather in Riga with the aim to critically look at the results of the study and their compliance with the requirements of a wide range of world-class epidemiological studies. A separate forum will be devoted to explaining the principles of research and Latvia's experience to specialists from countries with high morbidity: Belarus, Ukraine,

Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan. The purpose of the discussion is to explore the possibility of expanding research activities in these countries.

In addition to the aforementioned, visits to research centers (for example, in Madona) and LU collaborating partners - the Riga Eastern Clinical University Hospital, the Gastro Center for Digestive Diseases GASTRO and the Academic Histology Laboratory are planned.

A separate part of the conference will focus on outstanding issues and advanced technological developments in gastric cancer prevention. Representatives of the EU Horizon 2020 project SNIFFPHONE from Germany, Finland, Israel will participate in the discussion. Within the framework of the project, the clinical work is coordinated by the University of Latvia. Particular attention will be paid to microbial research and conservation issues (it is important that the broad use of antibiotics to help fight the main cause of gastric cancer - helicobacter, does not cause significant adverse reactions). Representatives of industry and world leading laboratories will also attend.

The forum will conclude at the same time as the University of Latvia International Medical Scientific Conference. At a conference in a plenary session, one of the leading European gastroenterologists Peter Malfertheiner from Germany will lecture on what researchers of the microflora have discovered in the mummy of a 5300-year-old "snowman" found in the glacial glaciers.

Europe Colon, a leading European patient organization, will provide information on planned gastric cancer patients' activities in Europe. Support for organizing the forum was provided by the European Cancer Prevention Organization (ECP), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), and the Foundation for the Support of the Riga Eastern Clinical University. The main source of funding is the University of Latvia Academic Development Project "Organization of International gastric Cancer Prevention Forum and its Related Activities" (LU reg.Nr. AAP2017 / 16). Expenditure of organizing the conference is planned to be covered from the ERDF funding for specific goals of support "1.1.1.5 Support for international cooperation projects in research and innovation.

The GISTAR research and events are also supported by the Latvian Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Health.