



Agenda for Cancer Research KI Executive Board meeting

**Tuesday January 28th, 2024, 15:00-17:00** <https://ki-se.zoom.us/j/68682051936>

(IP= information point, D=discussion point, DP=Decision point, A=Attached document)

<b>Board members</b>	<p>Chair and Director <b>Elias Arnér</b>, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p>Co-Director <b>Marco Gerling</b>, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology – CLINTEC</p> <p>Co-Director <b>Linda Lindström</b>, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p><b>Simon Ekman</b>, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p><b>Päivi Östling</b>, Department of Oncology-Pathology, SciLifeLab</p> <p><b>Margareta Wilhelm</b>, Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology</p> <p><b>Matthias Löhr</b>, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology</p> <p><b>Renske Altena</b>, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p><b>Keith Humphreys</b>, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics</p> <p><b>Ninib Baryawno</b>, Department of Women's and Children's Health</p> <p><b>Patrik Rossi</b>, Managing Director, Cancer Theme Karolinska University</p> <p><b>Carlos Rodrigues</b>, Junior Faculty Representative, Department of Women's and Children's Health</p> <p><b>Sara Abu Ajamieh</b>, PhD student representative, Department of Women's and Children's Health</p> <p><b>Lise-lott Eriksson</b>, Chair of the Blood Cancer Forum, Patient Group</p> <p><b>Joakim Dillner</b> Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology, Cancer Prevention Europe</p> <p><b>Liselotte Bäckdahl</b>, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p><b>Stefina Milanova</b>, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p><b>Johanna Mayer</b>, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p><b>Pablo Martí Andrés</b>, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p>
<b>Invited Guests</b>	<p><b>Svetlana Bajalica Lagercrantz</b>, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p><b>Barbro Ehlin-Henriksson</b>, NatiON Coordinator, Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology</p>
<b>Not present</b>	<p><b>Eva Jolly</b>, Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre coordinator</p> <p><b>Jonas Fuxe</b>, Department of Laboratory Medicine, Reference Group Chair</p> <p><b>Lena Sharp</b>, RCC Stockholm-Gotland</p> <p><b>Dina Dabaghie</b>, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p>

- 1) Welcome to the meeting and approval of minutes from the previous CRKI Executive Board meeting 2024-12-16(A) (E. Arnér, 1 min) DP

No comments on the minutes from the previous meeting. The minutes were **Approved**.

Carlos Rodrigues was introduced as the new Junior Faculty Representative.

- 2) New CRKI Vice-director (E. Arnér, 5 min) IP



The Committee for Research formally approved Linda Lindström as the new co-director of Cancer Research KI. Linda thanked the Board and expressed her enthusiasm to work with everyone in her new position.

3) New CRKI research administrator Pablo Martí Andrés. (L. Bäckdahl, 5 min) IP

Pablo Martí Andrés was introduced as the new Research Administrator at CRKI, who will be replacing Johanna Mayer. Elias Arnér thanked Johanna for her excellent work at CRKI and wished her the best on her future.

4) Response to KF regarding gender equality in outcome of CRKI Grants. (Arnér, 10 min) D

The Committee of Research (KF) contacted Cancer Research KI specifically over the gender balance in the grants awarded by CRKI for the years 2023 and 2024. Despite efforts to maintain equal approval rates between men and women, the proportion of female applicants remains lower than desired. Key points discussed:

- **Gender Distribution:** Approximately 35-40% of applicants and awardees are women, reflecting the gender balance among PIs at Karolinska Institutet.
- **Approval Rates:** Approval rates for grants are virtually identical between men and women.
- **Challenges:** The gender imbalance is seen as a systemic issue within Karolinska Institutet, not unique to CRKI.
- **Suggestions:**
  - Form a task force or work group within the Executive Board to address gender imbalances.
  - Collaborate with the WISE initiative at Karolinska Institutet for guidance and potential seminars.
  - Conduct statistics on the gender balance among reviewers, not just applicants and awardees.
  - Consider anonymous grant evaluations to mitigate biases.
  - Focus on supporting junior researchers, who have a more balanced gender distribution.
  - Explore long-term strategies to increase the percentage of women in science and research.

These steps will be communicated to the Committee for Research, emphasizing the need for a dialogue and pointing out the broader systematic gender imbalance at Karolinska Institute.

5) Selecting new members for KCCC SAB. (M. Gerling, 10 min) D



The process of selecting new members for the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre (KCCC) was discussed. The SAB currently has 7 members, with 4 members (Laura Esserman, Cornelis van de Velde, Nancy Berliner, and Julian Downward) willing to continue. The selection process is urgent, and suggestions for new members are required. The list of potential new members should be diverse, avoiding a homogenous group of senior individuals, and the areas of expertise considered valuable for the SAB were previously circulated among the Executive Board members for their consideration.

The current intention is to reach out to the European Academy of Cancer Sciences for support and input on nominees. The suggestions from the Executive Board members will be compiled and reviewed, and the nominees will be contacted after approval by the Board of Directors.

6) Nationella cancerstrategin for review by KI and KCCC? (Arnér, 5 min) IP

Update on the review process for the National Cancer Strategy for Sweden, by Mef Nilbert.

The strategy is currently undergoing a round of comments from various authorities and organizations, including the Hospital side and the Comprehensive Cancer Centre (KCCC), coordinated by the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC). The medical faculties in Sweden were initially not asked to comment, but Karolinska Institutet was later included. The KI side, led by Elias Arnér and supported by the CRKI Co-directors and Liselotte Bäckdahl, has started coordinating responses. The review process is tight, with the final suggestion for the KI response due by February 25th for decision by the President on March 4th.

The key points to be included in the response are:

- Combining activities of Regional Cancer Centres and hospitals.
- Addressing the systematic gender imbalance at Karolinska Institutet.
- Strong emphasis on prevention and adherence to European policies.
- Input from various stakeholders, including the patient network and research sections.

The Executive Board members will read the National Cancer Strategy and provide comments. The response will be coordinated with SciLifeLab, and specific comments on prevention and research sections should be sent to Elias Arnér and Liselotte Bäckdahl.

7) Should "En dag för cancerforskningen" be a yearly event? Next nov 2025? (R. Altena, 5 min) DP

The possibility of making "En dag för cancerforskningen" an annual event was discussed. The previous event held in November was an event for the general public featuring KI researchers and clinicians. It was highly appreciated with significant participation and is now available online on demand.

The current proposal is to hold the next event on November 12th, 2025, and, to make the event more compact and cost-effective, it was suggested to record it in a studio (to ensure high-quality sound and images) rather than having a live audience in a large lecture room. The



event will be organized in coordination with the clinical part of the Comprehensive Cancer Centre who will provide suggestions for content and speakers. Besides, a preclinical focus was suggested for the next edition.

The previous event had a significant budget, primarily due to recording and video editing costs. The aim is to reduce the budget for future events. Previous recordings are available on demand, and it was suggested to collect all recordings on one site for easy access.

**Decision:** The executive board decided to make "En dag för cancerforskningen" a more streamlined event with a leaner budget this year, focusing on live streaming and on-demand availability of the recordings.

- 8) EUnetCCC twinning activity: live stream NIO workshops for radiotherapy. (L. Bäckdahl, 5 min) IP

EUnetCCC is an EU project that aims to build networks among Comprehensive Cancer Centres across Europe, with a strong interest in twinning activities between universities and CCCs. The upcoming radiotherapy workshop in Stockholm in collaboration with the National Institute of Oncology (Budapest, Hungary), scheduled for May, may be live streamed to involve other CCCs in the EUnetCCC network. Our twinning activity with NIO is gaining significant attention within the EU project, highlighting the success of the collaboration, and additional funding support has been provided for this activity due to its positive impact. This collaboration with Hungary is being used as a showcase example, attracting interest from other European projects such as CCI4EU, who want to learn more about the twinning activities.

- 9) CRKI to continue funding CKC research nurse? (L. Bäckdahl, 5 min) DP

Cancer Research KI has supported since 2011 the funding of a research nurse for the CKC, with an annual budget of 600,000 SEK, but there is uncertainty about the specific contributions and benefits to Cancer Research KI.

Johanna Vernersson, head of CKC, has been unavailable to present detailed information regarding the research nurse position at previous Executive Board meetings despite multiple requests.

As an alternative proposal, instead of providing a lump sum to CKC, the funds could be made available for individual PIs and clinicians to apply for trials using CKC. This would provide clearer insights into how the money is used and ensure it supports specific research activities.

**Decision:** The Executive Board agreed to postpone the decision and revisit the topic in the next meeting with more detailed alternatives and information.

- 10) SCRM 2025 Malmö, how to increase number of registrations? (E. Arnér, 5 min) D

Approximately 90-100 people have registered so far for the upcoming joint meeting in Cancer Research in Malmö (SCRM 2025). The previous event at KI had 600 participants. The final



registration deadline is in about a month. It is important that KI is well represented at the event.

The following incentives were proposed for increasing participation:

- Support of 5000 SEK per person for those selected for oral presentations.
- Support for those who agree to be chairpersons, especially young faculty.

**Decision:** The Executive Board agreed to continue promoting the event and providing support of 5000 SEK to those participants whose abstract is selected for an oral presentation to ensure strong representation from KI.

#### 11) Strategies to enhance the patient perspective in cancer research at KI. (L. Bäckdahl, 5 min) D

The importance of enhancing the patient perspective in cancer research at KI was discussed:

- **Previous Initiatives:** There was a seminar series aimed at increasing the patient perspective in research, but the appointed coordinator has since left KI. The initiative is currently in a standstill, but efforts are being made to appoint a new coordinator.
- **Current Proposal:**
  - Increase patient representation in working groups at CRKI, ensuring that each working group has at least one patient representative.
  - Collaborate with patient organizations to find suitable representatives (coordinate with Lise-Lott Ericsson and Anita Wanngren to identify and appoint suitable patient representatives).
  - Patient representatives will be reimbursed for their contribution following established routines at KCCC.

**Decision:** The Executive Board agreed to move forward with the proposal to increase patient representation in working groups and ensure proper coordination and reimbursement.

#### 12) CCE update (E. Arnér, 5 min) IP

The board of Cancer Core Europe will conduct a site visit on March 20th. The schedule for the visit is not yet finalized, but it will involve a full day of interactions. It is important for the executive board to meet with the CCE board during their visit. Further details will be provided as soon as possible.

#### 13) Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center Update (Eva Jolly, 10 min) IP

Eva Jolly was absent, so Patrik Rossi informed the Board. The report from the OECl re-accreditation process has just arrived. Initial impressions are positive, and work will begin on



creating an improvement plan. The report from the re-accreditation process will be shared with the executive board once it is official and final. Additionally, there are several ongoing recruitments: new Head of CKC, and new Head of Department at MTC and OnkPat.

#### 14) Cancer Research KI organization: IP

All WG leaders, update on working group progress (3 min each, 18 min total) IP

- WG1 Research (L. Lindström)

In this upcoming CRKI PI retreat, a new collaborative activity will be included. As usual, there will be PI presentations, which were well-received in the previous retreat, and abundant time allocated for interaction among participants.

The feedback received from the past CRKI Retreat held in September 2024 at Djurönäset was positive, with an overall score of 4.6. The patient perspective session and invited speakers received the highest scores. As suggestions for improvement, more discussion time after each presentation, including a patient advocate in the main session, and an earlier poster session are being considered for the next edition.

- WG2 Education (M. Wilhelm)

The Report to the Committee for Research Education is due in February, and the core syllabus is being updated with a deadline of February 14th. New courses will be uploaded by March 14th.

Regarding international collaborations, a second application round for the Research Education School, in collaboration with the University of Heidelberg Mannheim medical faculties, and a kick-off event planned for this summer are ongoing.

Applications for the PhD Conference in Cancer Research in Manchester will open soon, and WG2 will sponsor up to 10 applicants.

- WG3 Outreach (R. Altena)

Planning a workshop for patient organizations, likely to take place in June. This will be a short digital meeting with lectures from clinical researchers for patients.

Discussions are underway for a joint webinar with Cancerfonden and KI researchers who received the *kliniska behandlingsstudier* grants, which started in 2023, to stimulate translational and academic research. The event will be held online and will be recorded.

There are plans to increase visibility on social media by making more posts about the content created by the group.

Efforts are ongoing to recruit new members to the working group.

- WG4 Precision Cancer Medicine (P. Östling)



A new project funded by Radiumhemmet for the next 3 years will focus on advanced sample handling, particularly fresh material, and creating multimodal analysis. Its main aim is to create a cross-organizational unique identifier to link data in the future. The project is progressing well, with several meetings already held.

A Joint Action for Precision Cancer Medicine was submitted on January 22nd, coordinated by Sciensano (Belgium). The program includes 13 work packages and 3 arms mimicking the patient's pathway through the clinic: prevention, diagnostics and treatment, and follow-up. CRKI participates in work package 4 (Sustainability), work package 7 (Diagnostics), and work package 12 (Ethical, Legal and Social Implications) in collaboration with Karolinska Hospital.

- WG5 Industrial Collaboration (S. Ekman)

Started conversations with KI's Postdoc Association with the intention of organizing common events and seminars, and connecting more with industries, with specific focus on master students doing their work at companies, supervised by postdocs. Planning a seminar on IP rights and innovations for PhD students with KI Innovations later this spring.

There is an upcoming seminar on AI with startup companies and researchers planned for March and plans to organize a seminar on immunotherapy in the Nobel Forum together with Takeda in November.

WG5 continues to try to make the Cancer Research Horizon platform more accessible and visible to KI researchers, with several events planned.

A new homepage for the WG was developed and recently launched.

- CPE Cancer Prevention Europe (J. Dillner)

CPE works as a lobby organization to ensure that facts about cancer risk factors are well known and have an impact on research and prevention policies.

The next webinar is scheduled for March 3rd, focusing on diet and cancer, from prevention to treatment to prognosis.

CPE aims to use the network for joint European trials in cancer prevention, similar to Cancer Core Europe's success with therapy trials. KI could take the lead in this initiative.

The mission and vision document has been formally approved.

15) **NatiOn present request for CRKI funding for 2025** (Svetlana Bajalica Lagercrantz, 15 min)

• **Updates on NatiOn:**

Marco Gerling was recruited as a board member.

New courses planned for 2025, including a course in precision cancer medicine led by Päivi Östling in collaboration with the National Institute of Oncology in Budapest, which will be open for FoTO students. Additional courses are planned for autumn 2025.



The recruitment of students for NatiOn 8, starting in spring 2026, and the first alumni event is planned for April 4, inviting all NatiOn cohorts from №1 to 7. 100% of students from NatiOn №3 have finalized their dissertations, and 77% of NatiOn №7 students are from KI, 22% from Uppsala, with no students from other universities.

- **Funding Request:**

NatiOn requested additional funding of **1,975,000 SEK** to support students from KI.

There was a general agreement on the value of the NatiOn program and its courses, with positive feedback on the program's impact on educators and MD-PhDs.

16) Cancer Research KI administration update including Budget update (L. Bäckdahl and D. Dabaghie, 5 min)

The budget for 2025 is in balance, with a positive margin. CRKI received 19,419,000 SEK from the SFO Grant for this year, which is slightly higher than last year by 700,000 SEK. NatiOn requested 1,975,000 SEK for continued support.

**Decision:** The executive board decided to approve the funding request for NatiOn, ensuring the budget remains in balance with a positive margin.

17) Seminar and workshops by CRKI and relevant organizations:

- a. PI retreat Djurönäset, 17-18 February 2025
- b. Ethics seminar #2, initiative with 4 other SFOs, online, 7 March 2025
- c. PCM course with NIO 24-28 March Stockholm
- d. KCCC Day, Aula Medica, 31 March 2025
- e. Radiotherapy workshop with NIO, 12-13 May Stockholm
- f. Swedish Cancer Research Meeting SCRM Malmö, 22-23 May 2025

18) Any other issue?

No other issues were mentioned.

19) End of meeting

The meeting ended at 17:03.