



Centre for
Cancer Biomarkers



CCBIO Newsletter

www.ccbio.no

ISSUE NO 4, VOL 12, DEC 2025

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Dear all,

When you read this newsletter, I hope you share my sense that the CCBIO2.0 activities are increasing – with distinct enthusiasm. Many congratulations to Heidrun Vethe for landing a major grant from the Norwegian Cancer Society on synaptic formation in breast cancer. The fundraising to CCBIO's cancer neuroscience program, headed by Akslen and Vethe, continues. During a short period of time, 28 mill. NOK have been awarded by the Cancer Society and the Research Council of Norway. This is a very exciting topic and an emerging hallmark of cancer, with escalating international attention and activity. The funding is much appreciated.

Congratulations to Katrin Kleinmanns who received this year's Oncology Forum Award for Young Researchers - very well deserved. Katrin is a rising star in translational cancer research - and we have great expectations! Congratulations also to our young colleagues for various achievements: Ulrikke Hugaas, Magnus Kimo, Anastasia Kakol, Njål Lura, and Tara Helén Steinsland! And to winners of the photo competitions: Neda Hekmati, Johanna Ziegler, Hassan Elsaid, and Oda Fløtre – for showing key features of CCBIO events and for capturing the moments and interactions.

At the end of October, CCBIO hosted the 9th ScanPath Symposium over 2 days – including 115 participants from the Nordics and many other countries. We were fortunate to have a number of exciting keynote lectures, oral presentations and posters – covering many new technologies and possibilities. Thank you to all for coming and contributing.

Thanks to some of the PIs for giving keynote presentations - nearby and far away: Strell at Fudan University Shanghai (and for bringing CCBIO in Brief 2024 to China), Bjørge together with Jeanette Hoel at the EUPATI Norway Webinar, and to several CCBIO researchers for presenting at the DRIV conference.

Erling Høivik is navigating the research school, and he also chaired the recent CCBIO906 course with help from Siren Fromreide – thank you. The RSCS is really one of the key hallmarks and drivers of CCBIO and need to be supported (and not forgotten) by all teams in the center.

Also, take a look at new publications and future events. And you can read about 'Gullberg's Travels' – international experience is really one of the main pillars in science. I encourage all colleagues in the 'transition phase' to start planning for a period abroad.

Finally, thanks to all of you in the CCBIO family, researchers and administration, for the hard work.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2026!

Best regards, Lars A. Akslen, Director

***Capturing cancer complexity
and clinical challenges***

Highlights from the 9th ScanPath



Photo by Ingvild Festervoll Melien

The 9th ScanPath Symposium gathered 115 researchers, clinicians, and industry partners at Solstrand for two inspiring days October 29–30 dedicated to translational pathology. Hosted by CCBIO, the event featured talks on advanced tissue studies, biomarker discovery, digital pathology and AI, and the new field of cancer neuroscience.

A highlight was the strong presence of young researchers—36 posters and several short talks added fresh energy to the discussions.

Keynotes included among other **Karin Jirström** on reshaping pathology for hard-to-treat cancers, **Trine Tramm** on tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes as predictive markers, and **Per Uhlén** showcasing groundbreaking 3D imaging techniques. Industry partners also joined in, presenting the latest tools and fostering collaboration between research and technology.

“We really have the feeling that a ‘revolution’ is taking place - with increased understanding of tissue context and complexity,” said Lars A. Akslen, CCBIO Director about the meeting.

With current topics, lively discussions, and fruitful networking, the symposium continues to strengthen Nordic collaboration and drive progress in translational pathology.

[Read news story about the 9th ScanPath here.](#)

Winners of the symposium photo competitions



Winners of the photo competitions at our two meetings at Solstrand are Neda Hekmati, Johanna Ziegler, Hassan Elsaid, and Oda Fløtre!

For the 13th CCBIO Annual Symposium at Solstrand in May, and for the 9th ScanPath in October, we encouraged the audiences to join a photo competition and send us their best photos from the events. We would select one winner each in the categories Talks, Poster sessions and General interaction.

Neda did an exceptionally good job, landing the best photos for three categories: Symposium Interaction, Symposium Poster, and ScanPath Talks! Johanna won the ScanPath Interaction, Hassan the ScanPath Poster, and Oda the Symposium Talk category.

Congratulations! You will be awarded with free participation at the CCBIO Annual Symposium in 2026!

Thank you for your contributions, and also to all others who submitted their photos!

All photographers will be credited with their name whenever their photos are used by CCBIO, which might be on our web pages, in our annual report, our newsletters or our social media. To the left are some of the photos from Neda, Johanna, Hassan, and Oda.



Major grant from the Norwegian Cancer Society



Photo by Ingvild Festervoll Melien

Congratulations to Researcher Heidrun Vethe who has been awarded a prestigious grant from the Norwegian Cancer Society under the call "Researcher Projects 2025"!

The funded project, titled "Cancer-Neuron Synapses and Behavior of Breast Cancer" will receive NOK 8 million for the period June 1, 2026 – May 31, 2030. The funding comes from the thematic area Rosa Sløyfe, dedicated to breast cancer research.

Heidrun was actually at Solstrand at the ScanPath meeting when she got the phone call, struggling to keep it a secret till it was officially announced two weeks later.

This project aims to explore the formation of cancer-nerve synapses in primary breast tumors, combining patient-based analyses with lab experiments. The project will utilize advanced tissue imaging, omics discovery, functional analysis, including therapy testing, and studies to link findings to patient prognosis. By leveraging patient material and organoid co-culture systems, the study seeks to uncover mechanisms that could lead to new therapeutic strategies.

Read [the full story here](#), and also see [news story \(in Norwegian\) on the Rosa Sløyfe web pages](#).

Young Cancer Researcher of the Year



Congratulations are also in order for Katrin Kleinmanns who has been awarded the Onkologisk Forum Young Researcher Prize 2025. She received the prize for her research on translational PDX models as a platform to advance therapy in ovarian cancer.

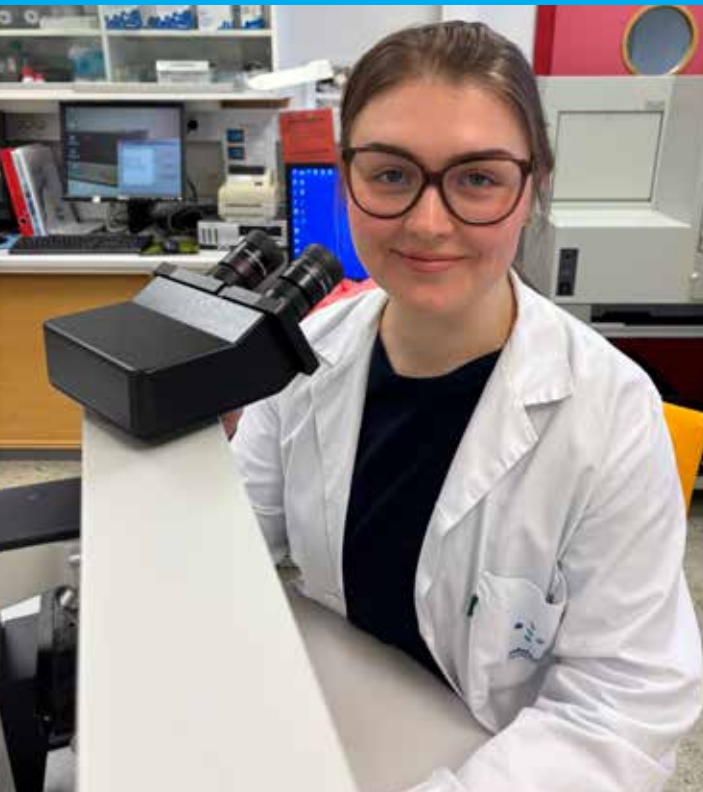
The award was presented at the annual meeting of Onkologisk Forum in Trondheim November 20, 2025. Each year, Onkologisk Forum grants a research prize of NOK 200,000 to a talented researcher early in their academic career. The goal is to stimulate young cancer researchers working in basic, clinical, epidemiological, or translational research who have delivered high-quality scientific work. The prize money is intended for research, equipment purchases, or academic travel.

Katrin's research focuses on developing advanced mouse models for ovarian cancer that can improve treatment through novel immunotherapies and targeted, image-guided surgery. These models are based on patient-derived xenografts (PDX), where cancer tissue from patients is transplanted into mice. What makes Katrin's models unique is that the mice are reconstituted with a functional human immune system, enabling them to mimic both the heterogeneity seen in patient tumors and key features of the human immune response.

Immunotherapy has revolutionized treatment for several types of cancer, but for ovarian cancer, neither checkpoint inhibitors nor CAR-T cells have shown promising results so far. Katrin aims to understand why, and to find new solutions.

Read the [full story here](#), and [news article in HealthTalk](#).

Straight from medical school to a PhD in cancer research



UiB's earmarked PhD fellowships give promising candidates from the Medical Student Research Program a unique opportunity to move directly from completed medical studies into full-time research. Ulrikke Hugaas is one of the students who received this opportunity, and she started her PhD at CCBIO and the Department of Clinical Medicine this fall.

Ulrikke's project focuses on young breast cancer patients, who often face more aggressive disease and poorer prognosis compared to older patients. Ulrikke aims to uncover biological factors that may explain these differences and contribute to better treatment strategies in the future.

She describes the fellowship as "a reward after medical school" and highlights how continuing research without interruption strengthens both academic development and future clinical practice. Being part of CCBIO has provided her with a strong support network, excellent supervisors, and access to world-class infrastructure, and she is happy to be able to continue here with us.

[Read more about her motivation, research focus, and advice to other students in this article.](#)

One year on sabbatical at UCSF



Sabbatical office space 2024-2025



Halloween at Pliant Therapeutics 2024

Professor Donald Gullberg has recently returned from a year-long sabbatical at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where he spent July 2024 to July 2025 in the laboratory of Professor Dean Sheppard.

Professor Sheppard's lab is dedicated to exploring the role of integrins in TGF- β -mediated tissue and tumor fibrosis. The lab employs advanced experimental models, including lung and tumor mouse fibrosis models and ex vivo lung slices, to unravel these complex mechanisms. In addition to his academic work, Gullberg collaborated with Pliant Therapeutics, a biotech company in South San Francisco co-founded by Dean Sheppard. There, he ran a biweekly journal club for the research department at Pliant (online for those that could not attend in person) every two weeks for the whole year.



Dinner in Sausalito, 2025



Self-driving taxis

For the experimental activity in the lab, the lab meetings were central. One weekly lab meeting was a hybrid meeting for people located elsewhere on campus and a second weekly lab meeting (similar to a departmental meeting) was only digital.

Methodologically, the lab emphasized RNA sequencing and mouse models—particularly reporter mice, which allow visualization of dynamic cellular events without relying on antibodies.

Gullberg found it to be an interesting and intellectually inspiring year. He summarizes the scientific impression as a high-quality environment where people focus on similar questions (lung fibrosis), and lab meetings that focus on manuscripts in-writing and reviewer comments on submitted manuscripts. Methodologically, a large focus was on RNA seq and mouse animal models (reporter mice instead of antibodies to visualize dynamic events) to understand cellular mechanisms.

On a personal note, he found San Francisco as beautiful as ever, though he observed the growing challenges of the fentanyl crisis, crime, and homelessness in the city.



Golden Gate bridge a Sunday morning in 2024

Best Poster at the Frampeik 2025 conference

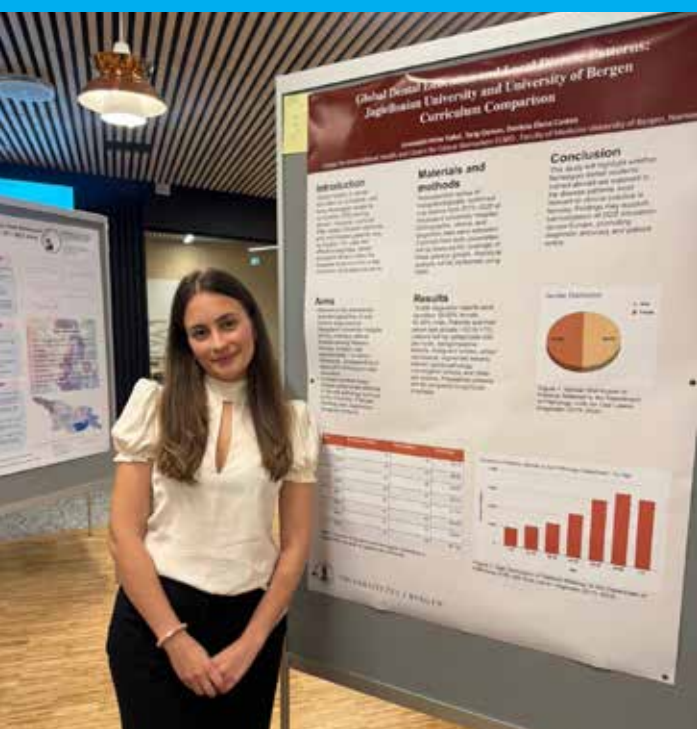


Magnus Kimo, Medical Student Research Program student in Costea's group (supervisors Harsh Dongre, and Dana Costea) received the prize for Best Poster at the [Frampeik 2025 conference](#) in Bergen with his work titled "Lymphatic vascular density (LVD) as a predictor of lymph node metastasis in vulvar squamous cell carcinoma."

Magnus investigated the prognostic value of podoplanin-defined lymphatic vascular density in a well characterized vulva cancer cohort. Using QuPath-assisted quantification of PDPN-positive lymphatic vessels at the tumor front, he analysed associations with HPV status, lymph node metastasis and survival. Although high LVD did not correlate with clinical parameters, the study emphasized the importance of assessing more parameters and their spatial context to better understand their predictive value.

This recognition underscores the growing significance of research at CCBIO on this rare and neglected cancer type, and it is particularly inspiring that Magnus received a prize for a study with negative findings. His award highlights an essential principle in scientific research: results are results, and even negative or non-correlating data contribute valuable knowledge to the field. Celebrating such work encourages young researchers to share their findings openly with the scientific community, strengthening transparency, rigor and progress in cancer research.

3rd prize for Best Poster at the Global Health Norway Conference 2025



Anastasia Kakol, master student in Costea's group (supervisors Dana Costea, and Tarig Osman), was awarded the 3rd prize for Best Poster at the Global Health Norway Conference 2025.

Anastasia's poster, "Global Dental Education and Local Disease Patterns: Curriculum Comparison between Jagiellonian University, Poland and the University of Bergen, Norway" presented an important and timely analysis of how global mobility in medical (dental) education intersects with local disease epidemiology. Drawing on a retrospective review of 15,908 histopathologically confirmed oral lesions from Haukeland University Hospital (2015–2025), Anastasia assesses similarities and discrepancies between the oral pathology disease burden in Norway and the curricular emphasis at two major dental schools which train approximately the same number of Norwegian dental students each year.

Her work underscores the need for harmonizing dental curricula across Europe to ensure diagnostic accuracy and patient safety, especially for Norwegian students pursuing their medical (dental) training abroad. This recognition is a wonderful achievement and reflects the strength, relevance, and growing visibility of global health-oriented research at CCBIO.

Keynote at Onco-X Days in Shanghai



Dr. Carina Strell was recently invited by Associate Professor Yunfan Sun, MD, PhD, to give a keynote lecture at the prestigious Onco-X Days, hosted by Fudan University in Shanghai. The keynote session brought together four dynamic young principal investigators to showcase how spatial technologies are revolutionizing cancer research.

Founded in 1927, Fudan University's Shanghai Medical College stands as one of China's most renowned and historic medical institutions.



Alongside Dr. Strell, the speakers included **Dr. Ruiping Wang** (MD Anderson Cancer Center), **Dr. Liang Wu** (BGI Research), and **Dr. Ruidong Xue** (Peking University). The event also featured a number of excellent student presentations from Fudan's own researchers.

Strell was very touched by the generous hospitality and warm welcome to Shanghai by **Prof. Sun**, including besides the high-level scientific program also fantastic food and cultural visits to Baoshan Temple and as well as the city of Hangzhou. Through this collaboration, Carina Strell and Yunfan Sun aim to strengthen their research partnership and encourage exchange visits for students and researchers between their laboratories.

The famous CCBIO in Brief book also made the journey to Shanghai, adding a few extra kilos to the luggage and proving that science sometimes comes with heavy reading!

Focus on Patient and Public involvement



Jeanette Hoel on a previous CCBIO project meeting.

Professor Line Bjørge and patient representative Jeanette Hoel were invited as speakers at the [EUPATI Norway webinar](#) on October 31.

They presented the international PARIS project, which aims to improve detection and treatment of aggressive ovarian cancer through a team of experts from four European countries.

Prof. Bjørge and Jeanette Hoel shared experiences from their collaboration, stressing the importance of clear expectations, broad representation, and strong networks to bring diverse patient voices into research.

The session concluded with an engaging discussion on differences between national and international approaches to patient involvement. Norway is ahead in patient and public involvement, and our representatives hope Norway can inspire other countries to adopt similar practices.

Highlights from the 2025 Cancer Genomics course



On October 21–23, 2025, the Cancer Genomics course (CCBIO906, 3 ECTS) was once again hosted at CCBIO, under the leadership of Erling A. Hoivik. The program provided students with in-depth training on navigating different sequencing technologies and applying them to a range of research tasks.

The lectures were complemented by excellent project examples, illustrating practical applications of the methods discussed. [See the complete program here.](#)

The students expressed great appreciation for the quality and comprehensive scope of the course, from sequencing and data interpretation to clinical implementation, and for the methodological insights offered. They also appreciated the overview of ongoing cancer genomics research in Bergen, including opportunities at the University and the Hospital, and the possibility of running analyses at the local Genomics Core Facility.

Student engagement remained high throughout, particularly during practical assignments designed to foster collaboration and problem-solving in true CCBIO spirit.

We extend our sincere thanks to **Erling A. Hoivik** for organizing this comprehensive course, to **Siren Fromreide** (from Dana Costea's group) for her outstanding coordination, and to **all lecturers** for generously sharing their expertise and projects!

CCBIO at the DRIV National Conference on Women's Health Research



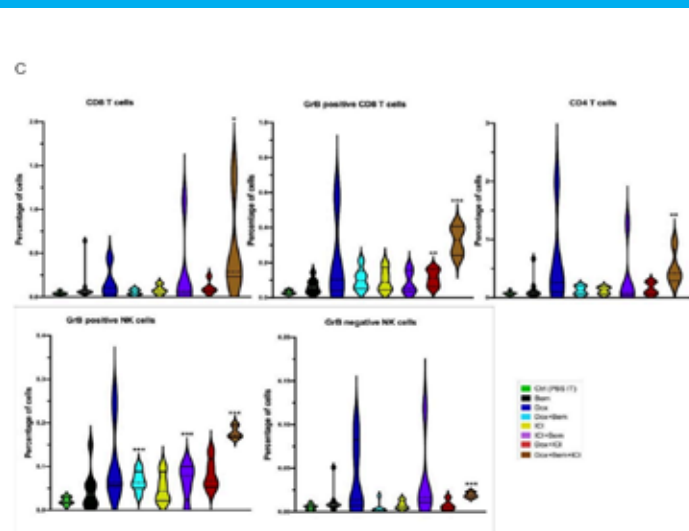
On November 5, CCBIO actively contributed to [the DRIV National Conference on Women's Health Research](#), held in the University Aula in Bergen. The conference gathered leading researchers, clinicians, and policymakers to address critical issues in women's health through biomedical, translational, clinical, and public health research.

CCBIO showcased several of its projects aimed at improving women's health outcomes. Our researchers **Katrin Kleinmanns**, **Lorena Larios**, **Mari Halle**, and **Luka Tandaric** delivered impactful presentations across multiple sessions. In addition to these scientific contributions, **Camilla Krakstad** delivered a keynote lecture titled "Why Translational Research Matters for the Individual Patient: Role of Vimentin in Cancer as a Valuable Lesson". Both Camilla Krakstad and **Line Bjørge** also served as chairs. [See the complete program here.](#)

The DRIV Conference emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and translating research into clinical practice to reduce gender-based disparities in healthcare. CCBIO is proud to be part of this effort.

Katrin and Luka presenting. Photo above by Eivind Senneset.

AXL inhibition boosts immune response in resistant tumors

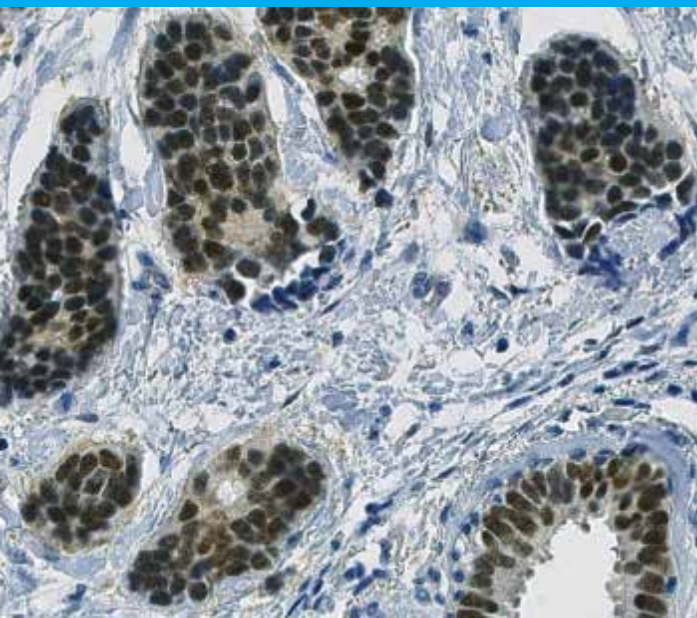


A recent study by Sushil Dhakal et al. incl. Jim Lorens reveals a novel role for AXL in suppressing IFN within tumors.

The team showed that AXL suppresses tumor intrinsic IFN responses by inhibiting the cytosolic DNA sensor cGAS via an AKT-dependent pathway. AXL inhibition in combination with chemo-immunotherapy demonstrated potent anti-tumor effects in poorly immunogenic tumors that are refractory to immunotherapy. The inhibition of AXL correlated with increased cGAMP levels, activation of IFN, and enhanced infiltration of T cells and NK cells into the tumor microenvironment. These findings reveal a novel role for AXL in suppressing IFN within tumors and support AXL targeting as a promising strategy in conjunction with chemo-immunotherapy for treating therapy-resistant tumors.

See the publication in *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*: [AXL kinase inhibition promotes cytosolic DNA sensor cGAS activity and sensitizes poorly immunogenic tumors to chemo-immunotherapy.](#)

Loss of androgen receptor signals poor prognosis in breast cancer

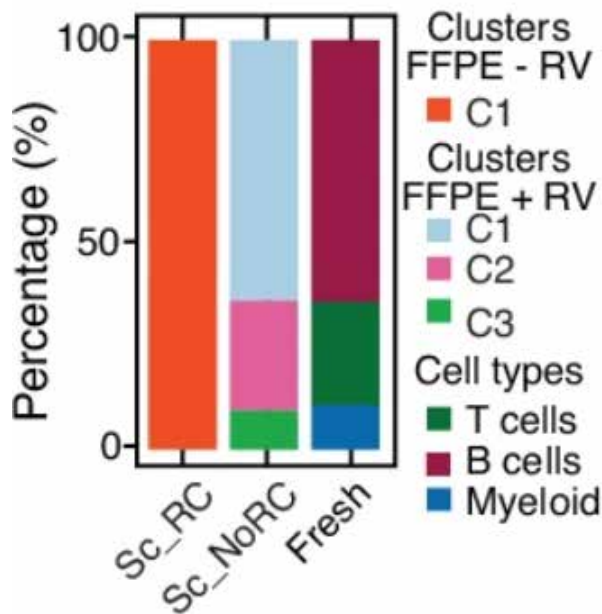


Ingunn Stefansson et al. incl. Lars Akslen found in a recent study that androgen receptor (AR) expression emerged as a favorable prognostic factor in breast cancer, demonstrating independent prognostic significance within the basal-like (CK5/6+) subgroup.

They studied the expression pattern and prognostic relevance of AR in BC, with special focus on molecular stratification. They analyzed a large population-based cohort of breast carcinomas with long and complete follow up. Loss of AR was significantly associated with features indicative of poor prognosis (larger tumor diameter, higher histologic grade, estrogen (ER) and progesterone hormone (PR) receptor negativity, elevated proliferation by Ki67, and expression of basal markers). Also, expression of AR was associated with lower proliferation by Ki67 regardless of ER-status.

See the publication in *Human Pathology*: [Loss of androgen receptor expression is associated with aggressive tumor features and reduced survival in breast cancer patients](#)

New single-cell epigenetics tool unlocks archived cancer samples

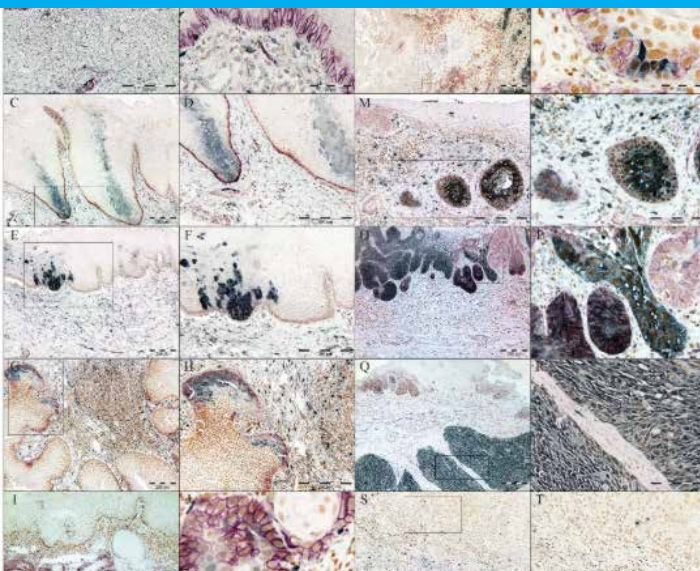


Ram Prakash Yadav et al. incl. Carina Strell present the assay scFFPE-ATAC that enables retrospective, spatial, and mechanistic epigenetic studies in long-term archived specimens.

Current single-cell chromatin accessibility technologies cannot resolve cell-type-specific epigenetic profiles in FFPE tissues due to extensive DNA damage. The team present scFFPE-ATAC, a high-throughput single-cell chromatin accessibility assay for FFPE samples that integrates an FFPE-adapted Tn5 transposase, ultra-high-throughput DNA barcoding (>56 million barcodes per run), T7 promoter-mediated DNA damage repair, and in vitro transcription. They benchmark scFFPE-ATAC on FFPE mouse spleen and validate its performance against fresh tissue. They apply it to human lymph node samples archived for 8-12 years and to lung cancer FFPE tissues, revealing distinct regulatory trajectories between tumor center and invasive edge. Analysis of archived follicular lymphoma and transformed diffuse large B-cell lymphoma samples identifies relapse- and transformation-associated epigenetic dynamics.

See the publication in *Nature Communications*: [scFFPE-ATAC enables high-throughput single cell chromatin accessibility profiling in formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded samples](#)

Mapping cancer stem cell diversity in oral cancer

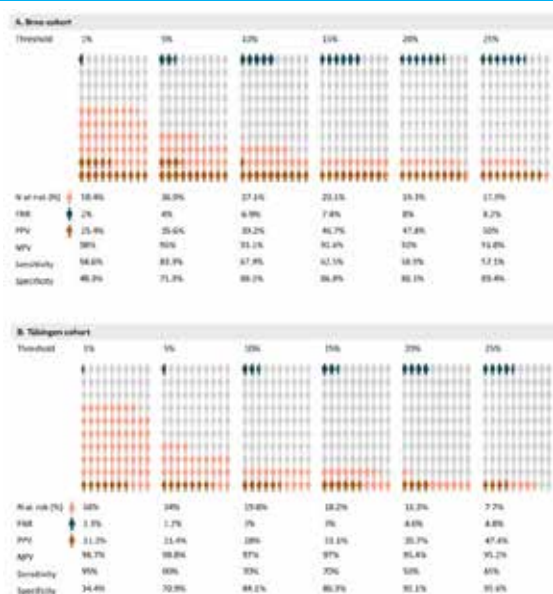


Tarig Osman et al. incl. Dana Costea show in a recent study that several stem cell subpopulations with distinct phenotypes co-exist in a tumor, each having impact on different clinical parameters.

They set out to investigate the pattern of expression and correlation with clinical parameters of two CSC markers, namely p75NTR and ALDH1A1, in both patient samples and cell lines. They show that several stem cell subpopulations with distinct phenotypes co-exist in a tumor, each having impact on different clinical parameters. The cell subpopulations identified by the use of different CSC markers were found to be dynamic populations, able to switch between phenotypes. In addition, our data suggest that the stem cell heterogeneity is acquired and evolves parallel with carcinoma progression.

See the publication in *Cancers*: [Identification of Phenotypically Distinct Cancer Stem Cell Subpopulations in Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma](#)

ENDORISK-2 improves risk prediction in endometrial cancer



Marieke S. Lombaers et al. incl. Camilla Krakstad demonstrates how ENDORISK-2 could aid clinicians in identifying patients in whom surgical lymph node assessment may safely be omitted. These results underline its power for clinical use in both high and low resource countries.

ENDORISK is a Bayesian network that can assist in preoperative risk estimation of lymph node metastasis (LNM) risk in endometrial cancer (EC) with consistent performance in external validations. To reflect state of the art care, ENDORISK was optimized by integrating molecular classification and preoperative assessment of myometrial invasion (MI).

See the publication in *the European Journal of Cancer*: [ENDORISK-2: A personalized Bayesian network for preoperative risk stratification in endometrial cancer](#)

Junior Scientist Symposium December 11



CCBIO Junior Scientist Symposium

- December 11, 2025, 09.00-13.00
- Room B302, Sentralblokken
- Lunch included
- Training in scientific interactions
- Connect with other young scientists
- Updates on current projects



This will be the last JUSS organized by **Mari Halle Kylesø** and **Vladan Milosevic**. Thank you for 3 years of excellent JUSS service! And welcome to new organizers **Hege Fredriksen Berg** and **Manuel Carrasco Fernandez**!

Welcome to CCBIO's last Junior Scientist Symposium for 2025! Lunch is included, just remember to register within the deadline. Discuss and connect with inspiring researchers across fields!

When: December 11, 2025, at 09:00-13:00

Where: Auditorium B302 in Sentralblokken, Haukeland Univ. Hospital

Registration: Please [use this registration link](#)

Who: Open to both junior and senior researchers as well as students.

Program:

09.00-09.15	Introduction
09.15-10.00	Keynote lecture by Henriette Ertsås : "Den Tapte Toleransen - Why do you not tolerate?"
10.00-10.20	Coffee break
10.20-10.45	Osman Osman : "Nationwide clinical outcomes among children with Cleft lip and palate in Norway"
10.45-11.10	Daniel Villarroel : "Experimental Induction of Cancer-Associated Fibroblasts (CAF) Phenotypes for in vitro Functional Studies of the Tumor Microenvironment of Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma"
11.10-12:00	Lunch (free of charge, register by Dec. 8th at 11.00)
12:00-12:25	Haydee Artaza : "The role of Copy Number Variations (CNVs) in Autoimmune Addison's disease and Diabetes"
12:25-12:50	Shannon Moreino : "Mitochondria transfer in GBM is mediated by TGF- β and promotes increased invasiveness"
12:50-13:00	Concluding remarks

CCBIO Seminar December 11



Join us also for the last CCBIO seminar this year! No registration necessary, just show up.

When: December 11, 2025, at 14:30-15:30

Where: Auditorium 4, BB-building

Speaker: [Luiza Mihaela Ghila](#)

Title: *Cell plasticity in bladder urothelium*

Abstract: [Seminar abstract on this page](#)

Chair: Carina Strell

Clinical Trials course January 14–16



Photo by Karen Gissum.

The completed program qualifies for a Good Clinical Practice (GCP-R3) certificate and covers several aspects of clinical trials – from design planning to execution – with learning examples from cancer research and neurological research alike.

Are you involved in clinical research or planning to be? The CCBIONEUR911 course 2026 offers a unique opportunity to deepen your understanding of clinical trial methodology, ethics, and implementation. Over three intensive days, you'll gain practical insights from leading experts in cancer and neurological research. The course includes certification in Good Clinical Practice (GCP-R3), essential for anyone working with clinical trials. Whether you're new to clinical trials or looking to update your knowledge, this course is designed to support your development. 2 ECTS for students.

When: January 14–16, 2026

Where: Campus Haukeland University Hospital

Program is available [on this page](#) and [more info on this page](#)

Deadline/reg.: January 5. Register in Studentweb for UiB students (2 ECTS), and [in an non-ECTS form for other participants](#).

Pre-Symposium for CCBIO's 14th Annual Symposium



We already have details for you for the Pre-Symposium for next year's CCBIO Annual Symposium, the 1st OC-INSIGHTS, May 10 and 11, 2026. Save the dates! Both events take place at Solstrand.

The 2026 title of the Pre-Symposium is *Improving ovarian cancer outcomes: harnessing tumor-host interactions*.

The [1st OC-INSIGHTS](#) will be a combination of talks by invited international academic and other senior researchers, shorter presentations by PhD students and postdocs, extended poster sessions where younger researchers can present their work, and ample time for informal interaction between participants.

Confirmed speakers include *Usha Menon, Ronny Drapkin, Charlie Gourley, Susanna Banerjee, Alexandra Leary, Sampsa Hautaniemi, Frances Balkwill, Krister Wennerberg, Denarda Dangaj, Anniina Färkkilä, Hanna Dahlstand, and Frederik Marmé*.

Sessions will include: Early detection/tumor initiation, Ethnic and histological diversity, Biomarkers and precision oncology, Preclinical modelling, Immunology and spatial biology, and Emerging cell types and targets.

The 1st OC-INSIGHTS is part of our increasing focus on innovation and academic-industry interactions. Also, we allow industry participants to take part in our extended poster sessions with similar sized stands among the academic exhibitors.

Save the date also for [the 14th CCBIO Annual Symposium](#), May 12 and 13! Details will be available later.



Photos by Ingvild Festervoll Melien.

Coming doctoral defense

Rammah Elnour defends December 5, 2025 his doctoral work at the University of Bergen with the thesis "Advancing Translational Approaches in Vulvar Squamous Cell Carcinoma". The trial lecture is the same day.

Rammah has done his work at the Department of Clinical Medicine and CCBIO. Supervisors: Researcher Harsh Dongre, Professor Line Bjørge, Professor Daniela Elena Costea, and Researcher Ahmed Rashad Elsebahy.

Trial lecture: December 5, 2025, at 10:15

Place: Auditorium Cavum, Odontologibygget, Årstadveien 19

Topic: "Prospects of modeling tumor-immune interactions in gynecological cancers to advance immunotherapy."

Doctoral defense: December 5, 2025, at 12:15

Place: Auditorium Cavum, Odontologibygget, Årstadveien 19

Dissertation title: "Advancing Translational Approaches in Vulvar Squamous Cell Carcinoma"

1. opponent: Professor Göran Landberg, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

2. opponent: Associate Senior Lecturer Christina Sakellariou, Lund University, Sweden

3. member of the committee: Researcher André Sulen, University of Bergen, Norway

The defense will be chaired by Professor Jone Trovik.

[See the press release.](#)

Open to the public.



Rammah Elnour. Photo by Dr. Marouf.

Recent doctoral defenses

Njål Lura defended October 24, 2025 his doctoral work at the University of Bergen with the thesis "MRI Precision imaging for individualized treatment in uterine cervical cancer".



Njål Lura. Photo by Irene Flønes.

Cervical cancer affects around 300 women annually in Norway. Before treatment, most undergo pelvic MRI, which provides crucial information about disease extent and staging—essential for choosing the right therapy. MRI findings can also help assess the risk of recurrence. This dissertation includes three sub-studies exploring how key MRI findings support accurate staging and introduce new imaging markers.

The first study showed that radiologists largely agreed on key MRI criteria used in FIGO staging, such as tumor size and spread. This supports MRI as a reliable tool for treatment planning. The second study found that tumor size on MRI strongly predicts survival. Tumors over 4 cm were linked to higher recurrence risk, and measurements were consistent across radiologists. The third study used diffusion-weighted MRI to assess tumor aggressiveness. When combined with traditional staging, it improved risk classification and treatment precision.

Overall, the findings show that MRI enables more precise diagnostics and safer treatment pathways in cervical cancer. It helps identify high-risk patients early, avoid overtreatment in low-risk cases, and support timely, individualized treatment decisions.

Supervisors have been Professor Ingfrid S. Haldorsen, Professor Camilla Krakstad, and Dr. Kathrine Woie.

See [the press release](#), or [find the dissertation in NVA](#).

Tara Helén Steinsland Dowling defended November 18, 2025 her doctoral work at the University of Bergen with the thesis "Acute myeloid leukemia at single-cell resolution: Clonal heterogeneity in precision therapy".



Tara Steinsland Dowling. Photo by Øyvind Hjølmen.

Despite treatment with intensive chemotherapy and consolidation therapy, more than half of AML patients experience disease relapse. Relapse is believed to result from therapy-resistant leukemic stem cells. They are surviving cell populations that often are composed of clones harboring identical genetic mutations in the DNA. These cellular clones compete for resources, and those that withstand treatment ultimately drive disease progression.

In this thesis, Dowling aimed to characterize the heterogeneous clonal landscape of AML through genetic and phenotypic identification / examination. She hypothesize that the assessment of the clonal landscape will propose promising prognostic therapeutic targets for AML.

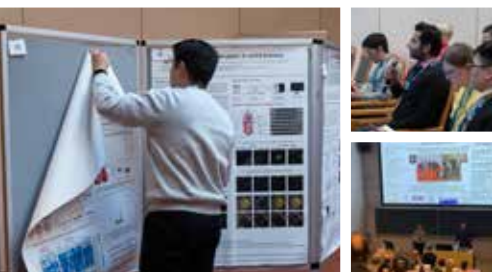
The results indicate that the genetic and phenotypic development are closely intertwined, and that diversity in the leukemic environment, such as species, strain and sex, likely influences disease trajectories. The use of mass cytometry allows the examination and identification of AML signalling proteins and oncogenes, aiding in the evaluation of treatment response and guiding precision therapy strategies.

This work is the first to describe and assess the use of CD37 for the development of a safer CAR T-cell therapy in AML.

Supervisors have been Professor Bjørn Tore Gjertsen. Co-supervisors were Cara E. Wogsland and Pascal Gelebart.

See [the press release](#), and [find the dissertation in BORA](#).

Coming CCBIO events



Make sure to save the dates in your calendar, and register when applicable. You can see all planned CCBIO events in the [CCBIO web calendar](#).

- December 11, CCBIO Junior Scientist Symposium
- December 11, CCBIO Seminar, speaker TBA. Time: 14:30–15:30
- January 15–16, 2026, [CCBIONEUR911, Clinical Trials course](#).
- January 29, CCBIO Seminar, speaker TBA. Time: 14:30–15:30
- February 19, CCBIO Seminar, speaker TBA. Time: 14:30–15:30
- March 26, CCBIO Seminar, speaker [Hussain Abbas](#), MD Anderson Cancer Center, USA. Time: 14:30–15:30
- April 23, CCBIO Seminar, speaker TBA. Time: 14:30–15:30
- May 10–11, 2026, [Pre-Symposium to CCBIO's 14th Annual Symposium](#), Solstrand
- May 12–13, 2026, [CCBIO's 14th Annual Symposium](#), Solstrand
- May 28, joint CCBIO/BBB seminar, speaker [Christer Betsholtz](#) from Uppsala University and Karolinska Institute. Time: 14:30–15:30
- June 11, CCBIO Seminar, speaker from cMyc. Time: 14:30–15:30

Other relevant coming events



Events from collaboration partners and other relevant events.

- Open ended, [Nordic Masterclass on HER2 Testing in upper GI cancer](#), webinar video by Onkologisk tidsskrift
- Open ended, [SOTA HER2 Low/Ultralow High-Risk Breast Cancer – Diagnostics, Treatment and Clinical Implementation](#), webinar video by Onkologisk tidsskrift
- BBB Seminars spring 2026, [keep an eye on this webpage](#)
- January 22, [Cancer Crosslinks 2026](#), Oslo Cancer Cluster
- January 28–30, [the 20th Annual Research Presentations](#) hosted by the Research School in Clinical Medicine at Haukeland University Hospital
- February 10–11, [Norway Life Science 2026](#), Oslo
- March 9–11, [International Forum on Quality & Safety in Healthcare](#), Oslo
- March 12–14, [the ESMO Sarcoma and Rare Cancers Congress 2026](#), Lugano
- March 16–18, [the ESMO Targeted Anticancer Therapies Congress 2026](#), Paris
- March 25–28, [the European Lung Cancer Congress \(ELCC 2026\)](#), Copenhagen
- April 17–22, [AACR Annual Meeting 2026](#), San Diego
- May 6–8, [ESMO Breast Cancer 2026](#), Berlin
- June 4–6, [8th EuSARC Annual Symposium](#), Oslo Cancer Cluster
- June 8–11, [EACR 2026 Congress: Innovative Cancer Science](#), Budapest
- September 10–11, [the Molecular Analysis for Precision Oncology Congress 2026](#), London
- September 14–15, [3rd European Cancer and Oncology Congress](#), London
- September 21–23, [Cancer R&D World Conference 2026](#), Miami
- September 24–26, [World Cancer Congress 2026](#), Hong Kong
- October 23–27, [the ESMO Congress](#), Madrid

Publications

You can find the CCBIO publications on [this pubmed link](#). See the most recent below.

- Eriksson J, Zheng S, Popa M, Bao J, Dai J, Wang W, McCormack E, Vähärautio A, Tang J. [Single-Cell Lineage Tracing Uncovers Resistance Signatures and Sensitizing Strategies to FLT3 Inhibitors in Acute Myeloid Leukemia](#). *Cancer Res*. 2025 Nov 21. doi: 10.1158/0008-5472.CAN-24-3753. Online ahead of print. PMID: 41270153.
- Barnes et al. incl. Line Bjørge. [Genome-wide association study of 398,238 women unveils seven loci associated with high-grade serous ovarian cancer](#). *NPI Genom Med*. 2025 Nov 20;10(1):73. doi: 10.1038/s41525-025-00529-w. PMID: 41266372.
- Dhakal S, Siraji MI, Grøndal SM, Skarsten GN, Moutoussamy EE, Gausdal G, Lorens JB, Bougnaud S. [AXL kinase inhibition promotes cytosolic DNA sensor cGAS activity and sensitizes poorly immunogenic tumors to chemo-immunotherapy](#). *Mol Cancer Ther*. 2025 Nov 20. doi: 10.1158/1535-7163.MCT-24-0440. Online ahead of print. PMID: 41263056.
- Yadav RP, Xing P, Zhao M, Hollander P, Strell C, Xie M, Salehi M, Torell E, Sjöblom T, Enblad G, Amini RM, Swartling FJ, Glimelius I, Micke P, Hellström M, Chen X. [scFFPE-ATAC enables high-throughput single cell chromatin accessibility profiling in formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded samples](#). *Nat Commun*. 2025 Nov 14;16(1):10022. doi: 10.1038/s41467-025-66170-4. PMID: 41238550.
- Osman TA, Rikardsen O, Teh MT, Sapkota D, Liang KX, Neppelberg E, Biddle A, Mackenzie I, Uhlin-Hansen L, Johannessen AC, Costea DE. [Identification of Phenotypically Distinct Cancer Stem Cell Subpopulations in Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma](#). *Cancers (Basel)*. 2025 Nov 1;17(21):3547. doi: 10.3390/cancers17213547. PMID: 41228340.
- Baysal E, Al-Sharabi N, Mustafa K, Costea DE, Brennan M, Suliman S. [Bone Marrow Mesenchymal Stromal Cell Osteogenesis is driven by Paracrine signals from Regulatory T Cell](#). *Stem Cell Rev Rep*. 2025 Nov 10. doi: 10.1007/s12015-025-11015-2. Online ahead of print. PMID: 41207974.
- Datar GK et al., incl. Gjertsen BT. [Disparate leukemia mutations converge on nuclear phase-separated condensates](#). *Cell*. 2025 Nov 4;S0092-8674(25)01149-3. doi: 10.1016/j.cell.2025.10.010. Online ahead of print. PMID: 41192422.

Recent CCBIO in the media

Recent media appearances by CCBIO PIs and group members. Date, medium, headline, and CCBIO person interviewed or referred to. For all media hits, see [CCBIO's web pages](#).

- 27.11.25, HealthTalk, "[Disse kreftforskerne får millioner fra Kreftforeningen](#)." Heidrun Vethe.
- 25.11.25, HealthTalk, "[Katrin Kleinmanns tildelt Onkologisk Forums Ung forsker pris](#)." Katrin Kleinmanns, Line Bjørge, Emmet McCormack.
- 24.11.25, NRK, "[Kreftlegar utanfor Austlandet i opprør mot Kreftforeningen](#)." Bjørn Tore Gjertsen, Oddbjørn Straume.
- 14.11.25, Avisa Hordaland, "[Eg trudde ikkje det var sant! Forskar frå Voss får 8 millionar frå Rosa Sløyfe-aksjonen](#)." Heidrun Vethe.
- 13.11.25, Khrono, "[Kreftforeningen med milliondryss til forskere](#)." Heidrun Vethe.
- 19.10.25, HealthTalk, "[Pasienter med eggstokkreft levde lenger med immunterapi - Haukeland-professor er storfornøyd](#)." Line Bjørge.
- 17.10.25, HealthTalk, "[Rekordmange Haukeland-leger på årets ESMO: – Viktig for både rekruttering og faglig utvikling](#)." Line Bjørge.
- 07.10.25, Bergens Tidende, "[Hege \(45\) blir ikkje kvitt kreften. – Eg såg mørkt på det ei stund](#)." Oddbjørn Straume.
- 02.10.25, Nasdaq, "[Mendus announces updated clinical strategy and operational focus](#)." Bjørn Tore Gjertsen.

Programs and Research Teams

Mechanisms of Tumor Micro-environment Interactions:

- Donald Gullberg
- Karl-Henning Kalland
- Emmet McCormack

Exploration and Validation of Cancer Biomarkers:

- Lars A. Akslen
- Jim Lorens
- Camilla Krakstad
- Daniela Costea
- Elisabeth Wik
- Carina Strell
- Agnete Engelsen

Clinical Applications and Trial Studies:

- Bjørn Tore Gjertsen
- Oddbjørn Straume
- Line Bjørge

Health Ethics, Prioritization and Economics:

- Roger Strand

Centre Director:

Prof. Dr.Med Lars A. Akslen
+ 47 55 97 31 82
lars.akslen@uib.no

Administrative Leader:

Geir Olav Løken
+ 47 55 58 54 36
geir.loken@uib.no

All administrative officers:
[link](#).



University of Bergen, Centre for Cancer Biomarkers CCBIO, Department of Clinical Medicine, Jonas Lies vei 87, 5021 Bergen. Tel. + 47 55 58 54 36
www.ccbio.no

