

PRESS RELEASE

JOHN HANSEN RESEARCH GRANT 2020

DKMS STIFTUNG SUPPORTS YOUNG SCIENTISTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BLOOD CANCER

Tübingen, 25th of October 2019 – On the occasion of World Science Day on the 10th of November, DKMS invites young researchers to apply for the coveted John Hansen Research Grant – the four scholarships of the DKMS Stiftung Leben Spenden (Foundation for Giving Life). Four grants of 270,000 US-Dollar each will be awarded. The research area of the project to be submitted should be in the field of stem cell therapy and have the goal of sustainably and effectively supporting and advancing the fight against blood cancer. The application period is open until the 8th of January 2020.

DKMS is well-known as the world's largest bone marrow donor center. What many do not know yet: With its own highly-qualified research team, a high performance laboratory in Dresden and various research programs, DKMS is also highly committed on the medical and scientific level to enable as many blood cancer patients as possible to receive a second chance at life. "To register stem cell donors is not sufficient for us", says Marcel van den Brink, chairman of the board of DKMS Stiftung Leben Spenden. "It is just as important to promote medical progress in this area."

An important building block here is the promotion of young talent: The John Hansen Research Grant (until 2019: Mechtild Harf Research Grant) has been attracting up to four talented young scientists every year since 2015. The recipients each receive 270,000 US-Dollar, spread over a period of three years. One of the prerequisites for application is a doctoral degree, which must have been awarded within the past eight years. The research area of the project to be submitted should be in the field of stem cell therapy and have the goal of sustainably and effectively supporting and advancing the fight against blood cancer. Various aspects may be covered including but not restricted to transplant immunology, stem cell donation, cell manufacturing, diagnostic and therapeutic strategies

In 2019, DKMS Stiftung Leben Spenden scholarships went to four young women, including the 32-year-old Dr. Katarina Riesner. She is a postdoctoral fellow at the Medical Clinic with a focus on haematology, oncology and tumor immunology at the Berlin Charité. With the help of her scholarship, she is currently working on the question of what role endothelial cells - i.e. cell layers on the inner surfaces of blood vessels - could play in protecting against the dreaded Graft-versus-Host-Disease. "The last few years of research in this field have shown that there is a connection, but treatment options have not yet been established. Therefore I am particularly pleased that DKMS Stiftung Leben Spenden scholarship puts us in the position of moving this research more into the focus and of investigating urgently needed alternative treatments for this life-threatening illness."

John A. Hansen – pioneer and multiple lifesaver

John A. Hansen, who the grants are named after, dedicated his life's work to the causes and the fight against the dreaded Graft-versus-Host-Disease. Hansen was an outstanding oncologist, an excellent immunogeneticist at the renowned Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle and an empathic and compassionate physician. With his outstanding achievements in the field of haematopoietic stem cell transplantation, he made a significant contribution to increasing the efficacy and safety of blood stem cell and bone marrow transplants – giving numerous patients a second chance at life.

As a long-standing member of the DKMS Stiftung Leben Spenden Foundation Board and the DKMS Medical Council he was deeply connected to the DKMS family. After Hansen passed away on 31 July 2019 at the age of 76, the Mechtild Harf Research Grant was therefore renamed in his honor. "We are deeply grateful for what John Hansen has accomplished as a physician, researcher and person," says van den Brink. "It was a great honor and a gift for us to have his personality and expertise on our side in the fight against blood cancer. What he has achieved will also shape and inspire future generations".

Further information on the John Hansen Research Grant can be found at www.dkms.org/john-hansen-grant or by sending an e-mail to grant@dkms.org.

Caption: John A. Hansen.jpg

John A. Hansen was an outstanding oncologist, leader in the field of immunogenetics, and a compassionate physician. He passed away on 31 July 2019 at the age of 76.

Photograph: Saskia Schoop for DKMS

About DKMS

DKMS is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the fight against blood cancer. Our mission is to give as many patients as possible a second chance at life. We are a world leader in the provision of stem cells for life-saving transplantations. DKMS is active not only in Germany but also in the US, Poland, UK and Chile, with a combined total of more than 9.6 million donors in our registry. We also carry out scientific research, setting standards in the typing of new stem cell donors in our DKMS Life Science Lab.

About the DKMS Foundation for Giving Life

The DKMS Foundation for Giving Life is the parent organization of DKMS and focuses, among other things, on advancing research projects in the field of stem cell removal and transplantation. The DKMS Mechtild Harf Science Award has been presented since 2001 and honors the best scientific advances in this field.