Rowing 600 KM for Research and Inclusion, in Spite of Visual Impairment

Starting on August 15, Anne Kinski, who is severely visually impaired, and Ulrich Kons, a multiple world champion and former Olympic champion, will row from Dresden to Hamburg. Other European champions, world champions, and Olympians from Germany will join them. The goal is to draw attention to incurable retinal diseases and to raise funds for research at the TU Dresden. At the same time, rowing novice Kinski wants to show opportunities that people with visual impairments also have and that they can fully participate in the society. The challenge is supported by the self-help organization PRO RETINA Deutschland e. V.

Rowing the 600 km from Dresden to Hamburg, Anne Kinski and her team will stop in 17 cities along the river Elbe. In each city, she wants to talk to mayors and inclusion officers to campaign for more participation and raise funds for a research project. "My motto is: the willpower opens ways that others consider impossible," explains Anne Kinski. Ms. Kinsky has already shown that she puts her motto into practice during her 2021 fundraising marathon. She hiked 100 kilometers along the Baltic Sea coast by day and through the night. The night hikes in particular were a challenge, because Anne Kinski has retinitis pigmentosa. In this retinal disease, the photoreceptors die leading to gradual vision loss. First, it manifests itself in night blindness and tunnel vision, but the progressing vision loss often results in complete blindness. There is currently no prospect of a cure. This makes it even more important to research and develop new therapeutic approaches. This is the goal that Anne Kinski pursues with her challenge.

Researchers Develop Methods to Transplant New Photoreceptors

"Transplantation of photoreceptors is a promising future therapy. It could help overcome photoreceptor loss in blinding diseases and ultimately help recover vision," says Prof. Marius Ader, leader of a research group at the Center for Regenerative Therapies Dresden (CRTD) at TU Dresden.

With this method, the photoreceptors grown in a laboratory dish could be transplanted to the patient’s retina, replace the damaged photoreceptors, and ultimately, restore part of the patient’s vision. Over the years, Prof. Ader’s team has made important progress in developing this approach.

“We are now able to grow human photoreceptors in a laboratory dish in a robust way. Recently, we have successfully used such photoreceptors to restore daylight perception in mice with degenerated eyesight,” says Prof. Ader.

Although successful in mice, the method requires more research before it can be clinically tested and validated to use in people. By donating to the fundraiser website http://www.rudern-spende.de/, one can financially support the research and help move forward the development of the photoreceptor transplantation method by the Ader group at the CRTD.

Together in One Boat
Anne Kinski has a vision: Together with the self-help organization PRO RETINA, where she heads the sports group, she wants to generate maximum attention. "Everyone should know and support us and our cause, so that the hitherto incurable progressive retinal diseases will soon be curable," explains Ms. Kinsky.

All rowers are cordially invited to accompany Anne Kinski and her team in the boat to raise awareness for the fundraising tour.

The planned stops:
Start in Dresden (15.08.) | Meißen (15.08.) | Mühlberg (16.08.) | Torgau (17.08.) | Wittenberg (18.08.) | Dessau-Roßlau (20.08.) | Aken (21.08.) | Schönebeck (22.08.) | Magdeburg (23.08.) | Tangermünde (24.08.) | Havelberg (26.08.) | Wittenberge (27.08.) | Gorleben (28.08.) | Hitzacker (29.08.) | Lauenburg (30.08.) | Ochsenwerder (31.08.) | End in Hamburg (01.09.).

More and current information about the rowing tour of Anne Kinski and her team, can be found on social media with the hashtag “#RuderChallenge22”.

About the Center for Regenerative Therapies Dresden (CRTD)
The Center for Regenerative Therapies Dresden (CRTD) of TU Dresden is an academic home for scientists from more than 30 nations. Their mission is to discover the principles of cell and tissue regeneration and leverage this for the recognition, treatment, and reversal of diseases. The CRTD links the bench to the clinic, scientists to clinicians to pool expertise in stem cells, developmental biology, gene-editing, and regeneration towards innovative therapies for neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, hematological diseases such as leukemia, metabolic diseases such as diabetes, retina and bone diseases.

The CRTD was founded in 2006 as a research center of the German Research Foundation (DFG) and funded until 2018 as a DFG Research Center, as well as a Cluster of Excellence. Since 2019, the CRTD is funded by the TU Dresden and the Free State of Saxony.

The CRTD is one of three institutes of the central scientific facility Center for Molecular and Cellular Bioengineering (CMCB) of the TU Dresden.

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URL zur Pressemitteilung: http://www.rudern-spende.de/ Donation link
Anne Kinski and Ulrich Kons during rowing training in Rostock