

PRESS RELEASE

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Preventing Metastases in Cancer

Hamburg physician Dr Anastasios Giannou receives the Ernst Jung Career Advancement Award for Medical Research 2022 for his study of cancer-related metastasis formation

Hamburg, 12 May 2022. Why do cancer tumours form metastases in the body and how can these often-fatal developments be prevented? Researching the underlying mechanisms and transferring the findings into medical practice is the aim of Dr Anastasios Giannou, physician and postdoc at the Institute for General, Visceral and Thoracic Surgery and I. Medical Clinic of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf. To support his promising endeavours, the Hamburg based Jung Foundation for Science and Research is awarding him the Ernst Jung Career Advancement Award for Medical Research 2022. This is accompanied by financial support totalling 210,000 euros over the next three years.

Metastases occur in the advanced stages of cancer and are the main cause of death in cancer patients. They can aptly be called "offshoots", as the original tumour "spreads" and an entire organ becomes affected. However, how these metastases develop depends on the communication between the tissue-specific cells in the respective organ, the respective immune cells and the cancer cells. Dr Anastasios Giannou and his team have studied the communication between these cells during metastasis. Based on their findings, they assume that immune cells in the tissue produce different messenger substances that can facilitate or impede the invasion of cancer cells and the formation of metastases. This means that influencing these cells could possibly prevent or at least limit the formation of metastases. Anastasios Giannou's long-term goal is to transfer his findings to the treatment of cancer patients and create the foundation for new immunotherapies.

Heading towards the goal with modesty and willpower: Dr Anastasios Giannou's career

"I know that I know nothing." With this motto, the Athens-born physician battled his way through his life and career. His Master's degrees in Medicinal Chemistry and Biochemistry were followed by a PhD in Biomedical Science from the University of Patras in Rio, Greece, in 2015. Next, the young scientist and doctor moved to the Hanseatic city of Hamburg. But this new stage wouldn't prove to be easy. "Starting an academic career was a challenge for me as a foreigner – in terms of settling into a completely new life, too. But I was very lucky to find mentors who believed in me and helped me to realise my full potential." Since moving to Hamburg, Anastasios Giannou has been working at the UKE as a research assistant in the field of molecular immunology and gastroenterology and, since 2019, also as a resident in general, visceral and thoracic surgery. While advancing his knowledge, he still places huge importance in not losing sight of humaneness. "I believe that to be a good doctor, humility, compassion, empathy, loyalty, patience and honesty are the most important traits."

Ernst Jung Career Advancement Award drives Giannou's research forward

Saving more patients suffering from cancer and metastases is a personal concern for the committed physician. "I want to be able to give good news to these patients more often: I want to be able to tell them there are new treatment options, that the prognosis can be better. That always pushes me to improve myself." After his difficult start, the awarding of the Ernst Jung Career Advancement Award is even more significant for the native Greek. "The Ernst Jung Career Advancement Award is a great honour for me – it means that my efforts and work are recognised. I'm very grateful for that." The Jung Foundation has already been committed to advancing human medicine for over 40 years. With the Ernst Jung Career Advancement

Award and two other awards, it supports science with more than half a million euros annually.

April 2022

About the Jung Foundation for Science and Research

The Jung Foundation for Science and Research, based in Hamburg, was founded by the Hamburg entrepreneur Ernst Jung in 1967. Its work, led by chairman Jochen Spethmann, aims to advance human medical research, promote new therapies and strengthen Germany as a centre of science. Each year, the Foundation awards three prizes with these goals in mind, which, with an overall prize fund of €540,000, are among the most lucrative medical prizes in Europe and promote excellent human medicine: the Ernst Jung Prize for Medicine, the Ernst Jung Gold Medal for Medicine and the Ernst Jung Career Advancement Prize for Medical Research. Talented young physicians can apply directly for the Career Advancement Prize. The candidates for the other awards are nominated.

For more information, visit www.jung-stiftung.de

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