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Press release

Universitätsklinikum Heidelberg
Julia Bird

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New Medical Director of Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacoepidemiology at Heidelberg University Hospital

Professor Julia Stingl will further expand research and consulting on individual and safe drug therapies. To do this, the specialist in clinical pharmacology also uses molecular data that makes it possible to predict the potential side effects of a drug for an individual patient and to develop an individually tailored therapy strategy.

Professor Dr. Julia Stingl has been head of the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacoepidemiology at Heidelberg University Hospital (UKHD) since January 1, 2025 and was appointed to the W3 professorship for "Clinical Pharmacology" at the Medical Faculty Heidelberg of Heidelberg University. She succeeds Professor Dr. Walter Haefeli, who retired at the end of last year after 25 years in this role. The 53-year-old physician was most recently director of the Institute for Clinical Pharmacology at the University Hospital Aachen.

"We warmly welcome Professor Julia Stingl to Heidelberg. With her extensive expertise, she will support the development of novel therapies from basic research to initial clinical applications in patients and into standard care," says Professor Dr. Dr. Jürgen Debus, UKHD's Chief Medical Director. "This is a forward-looking focus of Heidelberg University Hospital, for example in the field of gene and cell therapies for cancer and rare diseases. We are delighted that Professor Stingl will be expanding consultations on safe and individual drug therapy both within the UKHD clinics and for doctors in private practice. This is of enormous importance, especially for older patients, who often have to take many medications."

The department, with more than 60 employees, is the oldest clinic for clinical pharmacology and pharmacoepidemiology in Germany and is integrated into the Center for Internal Medicine at UKHD. In the Clinical Pharmacological Study Center (KliPS), the team led by Professor Stingl conducts early phases of drug studies. A large laboratory equipped with the most modern analytical devices enables pharmacological research at the highest international level.

"We are very pleased that Professor Julia Stingl, a proven expert in pharmacogenetics, has joined the Heidelberg Medical Faculty. Her research will enable us to better understand the influence of genetic factors on the effect of drugs and thus develop individually tailored treatment approaches for patients. In collaboration with leading Heidelberg research groups in the field of genome research, she will use the data obtained in this way to further advance the translation of personalized therapies," says Professor Dr. Michael Boutros, Dean of the Heidelberg Medical Faculty at Heidelberg University.

"In the future, these genetic health data will be just as much a part of safe treatment as classic information about a patient's age, weight and clinical history," says Professor Julia Stingl. "In my research on pharmacogenetics, I was able to show that the side effects of certain medications can be reduced by up to a third if a patient's pharmacogenetic characteristics are taken into account when making treatment decisions. This applies, for example, to drugs used for depression or pain, but also to transplant and cancer drugs. These genetic peculiarities indicate, for example, whether a

patient is unable to break down a particular drug effectively and help to determine the appropriate dosage and choice of medication." The Nuremberg-born scientist is particularly looking forward to the interdisciplinary cooperation, from basic research to patient treatment, including with partners such as the German Cancer Research Center. "Heidelberg is ideally positioned for translation; ideas for the further development of modern medicine are bubbling up here. This is where I would like to contribute my experience from the first clinical study to the patient's bedside."

Stingl's many years of experience at the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices in Bonn will also stand her in good stead. She would also like to teach students about the regulations and requirements that need to be observed when developing new drugs. "High-quality clinical studies are extremely important for patient safety and successful translation." Julia Stingl will teach students from all professional groups about the adverse effects that a therapy can have and how to recognize side effects. This clinical vigilance is extremely important. "In particular, new and unusual complaints in patients could also be a side effect triggered by medication. After all, in about seven percent of emergency patients in hospitals, side effects of medication are the cause of the complaints that led to the hospital visit."

About the person

Prof. Dr. med. Julia Stingl, born in Nuremberg in 1971, studied medicine at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, where she also received her doctorate. She then worked at the Free University of Berlin and the Charité, where she habilitated in clinical pharmacology. After a research stay at the University of Cologne, she accepted the call to become W3 Professor of Clinical Pharmacology at the University of Ulm, followed by a stay at the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a visiting professor. From 2012 to 2019, Stingl worked at the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices in Bonn as head of the research department and, from 2014, as vice president. She then accepted the position of Director of the Institute for Clinical Pharmacology at the University Hospital RWTH Aachen, from where she moved to Heidelberg University Hospital at the beginning of 2025.

Julia Stingl has been appointed by the BMBF as Germany's representative in the Pharmacogenetics Working Group as part of the European Commission's 1+Million Genomes Project. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Clinical Pharmacology, the working group "Generating knowledge by linking research and care" of the National Decade against Cancer (BMBF), the Drug Commission of the German Medical Association, Berlin, and was a member of the Genetic Diagnostics Commission (GEKO).

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Prof. Dr. Julia Stingl
Heidelberg University Hospital