

The Ministry for Culture and Science of the State of Nordrhein-Westfalen released the following press statement on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021:

## **Return programme: State brings six young researchers working in medically related fields back to Nordrhein-Westfalen**

### **Up to 1.25 million euros in funding: outstanding international talent will strengthen future medically related research in Nordrhein-Westfalen.**

Excellent scientific researchers are returning to the German state of Nordrhein-Westfalen from institutions abroad to strengthen medically related research within the State. As part of the 'Return Programme' instigated by the State's Ministry of Culture and Science, six young researchers have been selected to set up their own research groups at universities within Nordrhein-Westfalen. Research topics range from antibiotic resistance to tumour therapy in children with each researcher receiving up to 1.25 million Euros over five years. Nordrhein-Westfalen already has an excellent reputation in medical-related research and this programme serves to strengthen that position.

"We have succeeded in attracting six outstanding scientists to our research facilities in the heart of Europe. Medically related research is crucial for society and Nordrhein-Westfalen's existing strength and capacity in this field will be augmented by the return of these young researchers. Minister for Culture and Science Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen states: "I would like to extend a warm welcome to these six young scientists who are coming to us from top international institutions"

#### **The six researchers are:**

Dr. Sidney Becker (University of Cambridge)  
Dr. Elisabeth Kreidt (University of Manchester)  
Dr. Christina Lamers (University of Basel)  
Dr. Dr. Alpaslan Tasdogan (University of Texas at Dallas)  
Dr. Johanna Theruvath (Stanford University)  
Dr. Leonhard Hagen Urner (University of Oxford).

The current round of the Return Programme encompassed all disciplines relevant to medical research. The call was aimed at scientists who had: completed their doctoral studies between two and six years previously, or nine years previously for medical students; who were currently working abroad but whose principal residence was previously Germany. The awardees are now in discussions with a Nordrhein-Westfalen university of their choice and are expected to commence their research activities in the next few months.

The programme, now in its thirteenth year, is only available in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Since the first call for proposals in 2007, the return of forty outstanding young scientists, working in various disciplines, has been supported by the Programme. Today, the majority of them are tenured to institutions in Nordrhein-Westfalen and continue to teach and conduct research within the State. In 2018, the number of available places on the scheme was doubled from three to six with the focus last year on research into batteries.

#### **Information about the awardees:**

##### **Dr Sidney Becker**

Dr. Sidney Becker is currently working at the University of Cambridge (Great Britain). He completed his doctorate at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. The Return Programme will support his goal of researching the principles of molecular evolution, thus laying the foundation for innovations in diagnostics and therapy for a wide range of diseases.

##### **Dr Elisabeth Kreidt**

Dr. Elisabeth Kreidt, who received her doctorate from the University of Tübingen, will be returning from the University of Manchester (Great Britain). Dr. Kreidt will investigate how the properties of molecules change with exposure to light and can thus be switched on and off. These substances can be used, for example, as contrast agents in magnetic resonance imaging or as dyes for high-resolution microscopy techniques.

##### **Dr Christina Lamers**

Dr. Christina Lamers is currently working at the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Basel (Switzerland). She received her doctorate from Goethe University in Frankfurt. Her research focuses on exploring novel therapeutic and diagnostic approaches to accelerate preclinical drug development. In the long-term this may lead to the development of new therapeutic prospects, for example for autoimmune disease.

##### **Dr. Alpaslan Tasdogan**

Since completing his doctorate at the University of Ulm, Dr. Alpaslan Tasdogan has been working at the Children's Research Institute, Southwestern Medical Center of the University of Texas at Dallas (USA). Supported by the Return Programme, Dr. Tasdogan will investigate the effects of specific types of diet on the inhibition of metastases as well as the effects of tumour drugs in cancer treatment.

**Dr. Johanna Theruvath**

Dr. Johanna Theruvath will be returning from Stanford University School of Medicine (USA); she completed her doctorate at the University of Heidelberg. The Return Programme will allow her to develop her research into new approaches for immunotherapy of solid tumours and brain tumours in children.

**Dr. Leonhard Hagen Urner**

Since completing his doctorate at the Freie Universitat Berlin, Dr. Leonhard Hagen Urner has been working at the University of Oxford (Great Britain). Supported by the Return Programme his research will concentrate on developing new remedies to combat bacterial multidrug resistance.

Further information: [www.rueckkehrprogramm.nrw.de](http://www.rueckkehrprogramm.nrw.de)