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Welcome to the first DRFZ NewsFlash!

We are pleased to share the first issue of our new DRFZ NewsFlash, keeping you up to date with all the latest news from the German Rheumatism Research Centre Berlin (DRFZ), a Leibniz Institute.

From now on, the NewsFlash will give updates on our research and invite you to head to the [DRFZ website](#) to find out more about our research and activities.

Enjoy reading, stay healthy and connected with us!

Andreas Radbruch and Petra Starke

The DRFZ mourns the loss of Jochen Kalden



Simply put, without Joachim (Jochen) R. Kalden, the DRFZ would not exist. He was one of the founding fathers of the DRFZ and a pioneer of modern rheumatology and immunology.

Obituary

DRFZ research news



Immunological research has never been more important than during the current pandemic. The DRFZ website offers a summary of the latest research results.

Selected publications

DRFZ versus SARS-CoV-2



Immune system overreaction

COVID-19 patients with a severe disease course develop chronic inflammation that is no longer directed against the virus, but most likely against their own bodies - something also seen in chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases. One cytokine plays a decisive role in this.

[To the publication](#)

Risk for rheumatic patients?

DRFZ researchers are involved in data collections across Europe on how rheumatism patients react to infection with SARS-CoV-2 and whether treatment that suppresses the immune system promotes severe courses of the disease. Here you find an overview of the first results.

[To the publications](#)

How immune are we after an infection with SARS-CoV-2 and why do we usually need two vaccinations? [This article](#) (in German) by DRFZ authors in the magazine "Trillium Immunologie" of the German Society for Immunology gives an overview of immunity, also against SARS-Cov-2.

You can find further research results, background information and interviews on the [SARS-CoV-2 Section](#) on the DRFZ Website.

Charité and DRFZ - working together to cure rheumatic disease



The [Leibniz Science Campus Chronic Inflammation](#) links the DRFZ and the Charité-University Medicine, thereby bringing together rheumatic disease specialists and experts of other chronic inflammatory diseases. The Leibniz Association approved a further four years of funding. Professor Chiara Romagnani is the new head.

Young researchers

Avrion Mitchison Prize goes to doctoral students of the DRFZ

[This prize](#) honours the best doctoral theses in rheumatic disease research. In 2020, it was shared and two young scientists from the DRFZ were awarded:



Lennard Ostendorf

...was the first to investigate the successful use of a therapeutic CD38 antibody in the rheumatic disease systemic lupus erythematosus. This



Richard Addo

... detected unique populations of B lymphocytes in the bone marrow. He showed the survival of these cells was dependent on stromal niches which is

drug primarily inhibits the formation of pathogenic antibodies.

[Publication](#)

[Presentation](#)

crucial for the development of new anti-rheumatic therapies.

[Publication](#)

[Presentation](#)

DRFZ personnel

- **Angela Zink**, a bedrock of the DRFZ and head of the programme area "[Epidemiology and Health Care Research](#)" for many years, has taken her well-deserved retirement. She has decisively shaped the profile of the DRFZ and built up a rheumatism epidemiology department that is unique in Germany. [A brief tribute \(in German\)](#).
- **Koji Tokoyoda**, head of the research group "Osteoimmunology" was appointed Professor of Immunology at the University of Tottori in Japan. The Leibniz Association honoured him with an appointment to a [Leibniz Chair](#).
- **Andreas Hutloff**, head of the research group "Chronic Immune Reactions", followed a call to a W2 professorship at the [University Hospital Schleswig Holstein](#).
- The W2 professorship of [Kirsten Minden](#), head of the research group "[Paediatric Rheumatology and Health services research](#)" at the DRFZ, which is jointly funded by the DRFZ and Charité, was made permanent.
- **Hyun-Dong Chang**, head of the "[Schwiete Laboratory for Microbiota and Inflammation](#)" was appointed to a professorship for "Cytometry" jointly supported by DRFZ and the Technical University of Berlin. [Read the press release](#).
- **Anna Pfeffer** was elected equal opportunities officer.
- **Frederik Heinrich** was appointed as inclusion officer.

Events

The pandemic has also "digitalised" the DRFZ. Wherever possible, work is done from home. Seminars and meetings take place on virtual platforms - often even with a larger number of participants than before. Most events in 2021 will be virtual meetings.

Recent events



Annual Meeting of the German Society for Cytometry

As president of the DGfZ, Anja Hauser presented the anniversary conference in the new virtual format.

[30 Years DGfZ](#)



Albrecht Hasinger Lecture

The [Albrecht Hasinger Lecture 2020](#) took place virtually. Almost 100 participants followed the lecture by Christopher Buckley, who joined us live from the UK.

[Presentation](#)

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