

PRESS RELEASE

Balgrist University Hospital and AO Foundation: Collaboration in Research, Innovation and Education

Zurich, 7 October 2022 – Balgrist University Hospital and the AO Foundation are entering into a collaboration to create synergies in the areas of research, innovation, and education. The common goal is to optimize patient care and treatment outcomes in musculoskeletal diseases and trauma. The collaboration includes two jointly supervised PhD projects that begin in 2023.

With this collaboration, Balgrist University Hospital in Zurich and Davos-based AO Foundation are strengthening preclinical, translational, and clinical research in musculoskeletal medicine. Together with the AO Research Institute, Davos (ARI), the development of innovative and novel treatment methods and implants is being advanced for the benefit of patients. Furthermore, the research projects have the potential to achieve additional advances in surgical education and training.

A complementary win-win situation for patients

AO Executive Director Research and Development and ARI Director Geoff Richards says: "ARI is a research institute with a fully focused multidisciplinary research team on one campus and one of the top in the world when it comes to disc degeneration and regeneration, infection, and musculoskeletal biomechanics—the topics of the joint PhDs. Similarly, Balgrist University Hospital and their research units are very strong in translational sciences. This collaboration is a win-win due to proximity and complement of knowledge within our areas."

Professor Mazda Farshad, MD, Medical Director of Balgrist University Hospital, says: "We focus on translational research. As a leading orthopedic university hospital with an integrated paraplegia center, our physician scientists identify the problems that remain unanswered for patients and answer them together with basic researchers and developers. This fits perfectly with the founding philosophy of the AO. The historically grown research and innovation focuses of Balgrist University Hospital and the AO complement each other, and, when combined, will make Switzerland the country with the highest impact on musculoskeletal medicine."

Two joint PhD projects in 2023

The collaboration has already begun and includes two jointly supervised PhD projects that start in 2023 focusing on research projects at ARI and Balgrist University Hospital. One of the projects is on functionalized annulus fibrosus repair patch to prevent post-surgical disc

complication and the other is on patient-specific optimization of spinal fusions using validated computer simulations.

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About Balgrist University Hospital

Balgrist University Hospital is a highly specialized center of excellence for the diagnostic work-up, treatment, and follow-up care of damage to the musculoskeletal system. Interdisciplinary services combine the fields of orthopedics, paraplegiology, rheumatology and physical medicine, sports medicine, neuro-urology, chiropractic, radiology, and anesthesiology.

The broad spectrum of interlinked medical treatment is complemented by nursing care, social, insurance-legal and psychological counselling as well as integrated measures for rehabilitation and return to work. All these activities aim to provide our patients with the best possible support.

Balgrist University Hospital and the Balgrist Campus set internationally recognized standards in orthopedic research and education.

The privately owned Balgrist University Hospital is operated by the Balgrist Association.

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About the AO Foundation

The AO is a medically guided, not-for-profit organization, a global network of surgeons, and the world's leading education, innovation, and research organization specializing in the surgical treatment of trauma and musculoskeletal disorders. The AO has a global network of over 460,000 healthcare professionals. Each year over 800 educational events are offered around the world, supported by nearly 7,000 faculty members, and attended by over 98,000 participants. The AO has 18,000 surgeon members working in the fields of trauma, spine, craniomaxillofacial, veterinary, and reconstructive surgery.

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