Anticancer Fund

WE WILL DEFEAT CANCER

GUIDED BY SCIENCE AND DRIVEN BY PATIENTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Anticancer Fund

The Anticancer Fund is a Belgian non-profit organisation with an international scope. We invest in promising cancer treatments, putting patients' needs first.

Discover who we are and what we do, in this short video

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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INTERVIEW

LYDIE MEHEUS

Managing Director of the Anticancer Fund

How close are we to curing cancer?

"We are certainly getting closer because we understand the cancer ecosystem better, but the major lesson learned is: cancer is the emperor of all diseases (*) but the emperor will not be killed by a single innovative bullet, it will take an army of treatments and a wise strategy to defeat cancer."

How so?

"In the past decade there has been a tremendous increase in knowledge when it comes to understanding the mechanism of action of tumour cells. Moreover, great technological progress has contributed to the in-depth knowledge of cancer and lead to a broad scope of innovative treatments, but unfortunately a lot of options are left behind by commercial developers because they do not come with a substantial financial return. I believe all options, even less lucrative ones, deserve to be properly investigated and developed."

And what is the strategy? What is essential to move forward?

"Keep the focus on the patient! Push for innovation where the benefit to the patient is clear, identify unmet needs and avoid too much development of me-too drugs. And, in addition to the economically driven pathway for drug development, we need a complementary pathway supported by public funding to ensure that all valuable treatment options reach the patients. This will require private-public partnerships between drug producers and non-profit researchers, consultation of clinical investigators with patient advocates, co-operation between researchers across borders and a bridge between clinical investigators and regulators. In short, collaboration is key to new break throughs, as was nicely demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic."

How can philanthropy and an organisation like ours contribute?

"Our greatest value is that we can think outside the box, in an independent way. As financial return is not within our scope, we can solely focus on solutions with return for patients and society. We have no sacred cows and approach political decision makers to propose structural changes. We support scientists from all over the world to translate their innovative ideas into clinical practice. And, most importantly, we use our expertise to provide individual patients with evidence-based information on their treatment options. We fill the gaps!"

(*) in reference to 'Emperor of all Maladies, A biography of Cancer', a book by Siddhartha Mukherjee.

WE THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX TO CURE CANCER

DISCOVER OUR CLINICAL TRIALS

In 2020, we continued to financially support and coordinate clinical trials focusing on drugs and new therapies with limited commercial value, but with great potential for cancer patients. We investigated what is under the radar of the pharma industry and filled the gaps to make sure no reasonable opportunity to develop an effective cancer treatment remains untapped.

TRIAL 1

METRO-PD1

Children with solid cancers

The first phase of METRO-PD1, a trial for children with solid cancers, was successfully been completed in November 2020. The study is designed for patients between 4 and 18 years old with refractory or relapsing cancer. The study looks at three existing chemotherapy drugs, which are given in a lower dose and over a longer period of time, together with nivolumab.

In the first phase, different regimens of the drugs were investigated for toxicity. In the second phase, the efficacy of the most feasible and safe combination from phase 1 will be measured.

The Anticancer Fund finances this trial as there is a high need for new treatment options for children with these type of cancer where 1 in 3 suffer from recurrence after 5 years. We feel the urge to compensate the lack of investment in new cancer treatments for children, often left behind by the pharma industry.

Moreover, immunotherapy and in particular checkpoint inhibitors like nivolumab have been a real success story in melanoma and lung cancer, but have shown disappointing results in several other adult tumour types, as well as in paediatric cancers. That's why we combine nivolumab with other drugs and try to achieve treatment optimization.

This trial was supported in collaboration with Kick Cancer and Alexine Clarysse Fonds, two Belgian non-profit organisations dedicated to research in paediatric oncology.

Amount granted : 200,000 euro

MORE ABOUT THIS TRIAL >

TRIAL 2

STRASS II

Retroperitoneal sarcoma

We joined STRASS II, a trial in high risk retroperitoneal sarcoma, an aggressive and rare cancer affecting the soft tissues of the body. The trial opened for recruitment of patients in October 2020.

The study is conducted by the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC), a leading organisation in clinical research in Europe with a network of more than 5.000 researchers involved in cancer treatment, in 1.600 hospitals and institutions.

The Anticancer Fund is very pleased to partner with EORTC. With joined forces we will tackle patient-centred questions where there is limited interest from the pharmaceutical industry because the outcome might not be lucrative enough. Belgian entrepreneur Filip Balcaen, who supports the Anticancer Fund, describes the collaboration with EORTC as 'a true milestone'. Encouraged by this first successful partnership, a second trial with EORTC will be launched in 2021.

Amount granted : 700,000 euro

MORE ABOUT THIS TRIAL >

TRIAL 3

MATAO

Advanced epithelial ovarian cancer

MATAO, an international study in advanced epithelial ovarian cancer, was initiated in October 2020. The prognosis of patients with this type of cancer is very poor today, as only 20 to 30% of the women survive after 5 years.

This Phase 3 trial evaluates letrozole, an aromatase inhibitor that lowers estrogen production, which is already used to treat breast cancer. Earlier tests in small groups of patients have also recommended letrozole as an additional treatment option in ovarian cancer.

The Anticancer Fund supports the repurposing of letrozole, or the use of a generic, low-cost drug, for a new indication to prevent tumour recurrence.

Amount granted : 220,000 CHF (203,000 euro)

MORE ABOUT THIS TRIAL >

TRIAL 4

PROPANGIO

Cutaneous angiosarcoma

In March 2020, the first patient was included in PROPANGIO, a study that explores the activity of propranolol in angiosarcoma, an aggressive and ultra-rare cancer type that forms in the walls of blood and lymph vessels.

Popranolol, a β-blokker, is an already approved drug for treating high blood pressure.

The Anticancer Fund believes that studying a repurposed drug like propranolol, a non-cancer drug with well-known properties and available on the market at low cost, is a potential cost-efficient way to increase cancer patients' treatment options. By giving patients propranolol we might avoid recurrence of the cancer.

Amount granted : 170,000 euro

MORE ABOUT THIS TRIAL >

JOINING FORCES

Co-operation in research is the key to achieve breakthroughs in the fight against cancer. Together with the Rising Tide Foundation for Clinical Cancer Research, a Swiss-based non-profit organisation, we selected an important project focussing on therapy optimisation.

The Anticancer Fund and Rising Tide Foundation will jointly contribute 800,000 euro to this trial.

LOOKING FOR DARWIN IN ONCOLOGY

In December 2020, we launched a Request for Application to researchers worldwide. We would like to fund clinical trials testing therapies based on evolutionary principles. These interventions, like adaptive therapy, attempt to prolong response to cancer treatment by controlling the tumour as long as possible and delaying the emergence of resistant cancer cells.

We foresee a budget of 1.5 million euro.

WE CARE ABOUT CANCER PATIENTS

OUR PERSONAL SERVICE MY CANCER NAVIGATOR

People who are diagnosed with cancer find themselves on a physical and emotional rollercoaster. We provide them with assistance, by answering their questions and in that way, we "empower" them. Patient empowerment is defined by the World Health Organisation as a process through which people gain greater control over decisions and actions affecting their health. We support cancer patients throughout this journey with our personal information service, My Cancer Navigator.

MY CANCER NAVIGATOR

My Cancer Navigator is a support service for people with cancer, or their relatives, but also for physicians or health care professionals who are looking for evidence-based information about cancer treatments.

247

patients or relatives of people with cancer asked for information in 2020

6%

of the requests were about children with cancer.

5%

of the people who contacted us were health care professionals.

WHY DO PEOPLE WITH CANCER REACH OUT TO US?

30%

want to explore all the available treatment options.

1 in 5

has a question about a specific cancer treatment.

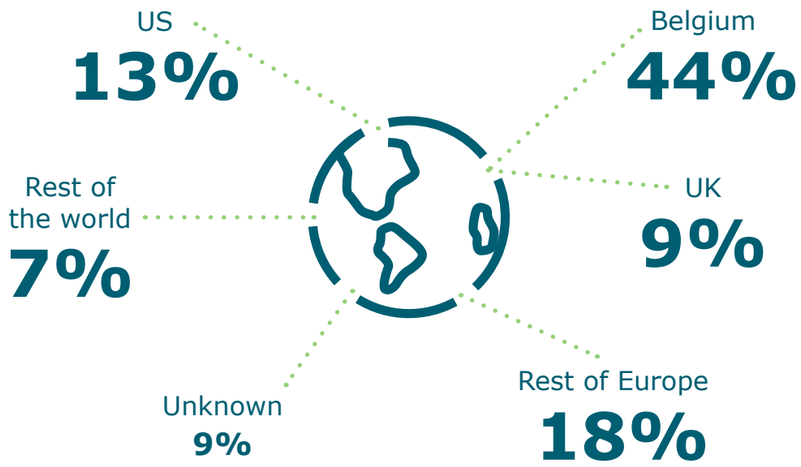
10%

is looking for an experimental drug or a clinical trial they could join.

COVID-19 IS AFFECTING CANCER CARE

The tenacity of COVID-19 has had quite an impact on cancer patients in 2020. Coping with cancer is never easy, but the epidemic of COVID-19 made it even more complicated: getting a planned treatment or being followed-up closely by a physician was often compromised. In these troublesome times, we urged patients to keep seeking professional help.

People from all over the world ask for information



EVERY PATIENT HAS A STORY

Belgium

An 11-year-old girl with a rare cancer. Her parents wanted to know if there were any other options left after her current treatment, which the doctors had said would probably be the last. We searched for a clinical trial she could join and found several for which she was eligible.

A 3-year-old boy has a specific type of blood cancer, for which an expensive drug is on the market, but unfortunately the drug is not reimbursed as it is not covered by the insurance. His doctor asked our help to see if we could get the drug directly from the producer. We found three companies willing to make the drug available for the child, and for other children in the same situation.

USA

A 44-year-old man with metastatic lung cancer was worried because his cancer had spread. He heard about experimental studies with vaccination therapy and was wondering if one of them could be a valuable treatment for him. We pointed out a clinical trial in this area for him to discuss with his oncologist.

Canada

The caring husband of a 56-year-old woman with a brain tumour wanted to support his wife in any way he could and therefore seeked information about additional therapies, such as mistletoe and vitamin C injections. We researched and summarised the available scientific evidence, which was limited, and encouraged the couple to discuss with their doctor which of those treatments might be considered.

France

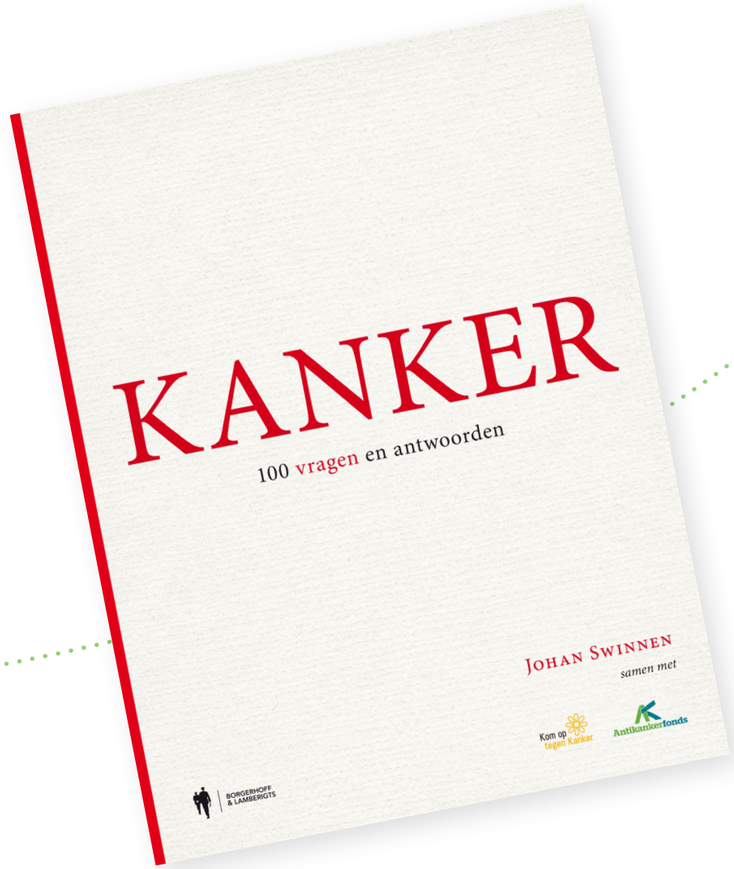
Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer among men. An 80-year-old man with prostate cancer questioned us about the use of antibiotics: should he take antibiotics to prevent relapse? We looked this up in the scientific literature, which did not mention any clear benefit, and so we informed him of other options he could consider, together with his physician.

TESTIMONIAL
NADINE

"I got in touch with My Cancer Navigator after my breast cancer relapsed. The personal contact with a physician of the Anticancer Fund was very important and definitely much warmer than an email or a telephone conversation. I could ask all kind of questions and I received clear answers, which gave me insight into what was happening to me. My Cancer Navigator really meant a lot to me."

CANCER IN 100 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Together with cancer researcher Johan Swinnen from KU Leuven and peer organisation Kom op tegen Kanker, the Anticancer Fund has written a book about cancer. Johan, who got personally confronted with cancer when his son was diagnosed, teamed up with contributors from Kom op tegen Kanker and Guy Buyens, Medical Director of the Anticancer Fund, to answer 100 frequently asked questions about cancer.



OUR POLICY ENGAGEMENT

WE MAKE SURE THE VOICE OF THE PATIENT IS HEARD

Every cancer patient must have an equitable chance of getting access to innovative treatments that improve their life. That's what we aim at. To do so, we engage with policymakers and ensure they put the patients' needs first. In 2020 we focused our policy work on cancer research in Belgium and on cancer as a whole in Europe.

BELGIUM

Towards a better use of research funds

The King Baudouin Foundation (KBF) manages a portfolio of over a hundred medical research-oriented funds. Oncology research represents a major part in this portfolio. The foundation supports a strategic reflection on how oncology research in Belgium is structured, with the intention to optimise its value for cancer patients. Different key actors in the Belgian oncology field and a number of international experts are involved. Lydie Meheus, Managing Director of the Anticancer Fund, is a member of the guidance committee of this project.

The main question the group is reflecting on:

"How can we ensure that cancer patients have rapid and affordable access to the results of evidence-based, publicly and philanthropically funded studies, to improve their life expectancy and quality of life ?"

A closer look at cell therapies: How to make them accessible?

Cell therapies, transforming our immune cells into snipers to attack the cancer cells, are a very promising area of cancer research, designed to improve the immune system's ability to fight cancer. Some of these cell therapies, like CAR-T, are already put on the market by the pharmaceutical industry, be it at extremely high prices.

Together with Stichting tegen Kanker / Fondation contre le Cancer and Kom op tegen Kanker, the Anticancer Fund has invited Belgian research teams and university decision makers to jointly address the challenges of developing autologous cell therapies in an academic environment accessible for patients, without involvement of the pharma industry.

This exercise has resulted in a green paper that is used in a dialogue with additional stakeholders, including payers and regulators. Together we are exploring the options to deal with the hurdles.

TOGETHER, WE CAN DO MORE

Partnerships are essential to progress in the fight against cancer.

In 2020, we partnered up with the **European Cancer Organisation**, a non-profit federation of societies working in cancer at European level, and a respected information source for the European Commission and the European Parliament. Through our partnership we are connected with all professional stakeholders in the oncology field: medical societies, patient advocates and the pharma industry. Our contribution is much appreciated because of our unique profile as an independent research foundation.

We also joined the **European Public Health Alliance**, Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating better health for all. As a member, we share our views, which the organisation takes along in its actions and campaigns.

EUROPE

The new European Commission has put the fight against cancer high on its agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic made Europe realise the need for a strong health care system: the pandemic revealed that more public funds for research were necessary, as well as a faster evaluation and approval pathway for new treatments withal.

If mountains can be moved to fight COVID-19, why not for cancer?

In June 2020 we organised a webinar to raise awareness of the untapped potential of repurposed drugs in the treatment of cancer against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Repurposed drugs, i.e. using existing drugs for new indications, can open new perspectives. EU policy makers, researchers, physicians and patients discussed whether the coronavirus crisis is driving us towards a paradigm shift in the way treatments are researched, developed and delivered. Experts from all over the world in research and regulation listened to the views of the panelists. We counted more than 100 participants.

"As delivering affordable and accessible medicines will be more important than ever, drug repurposing presents an opportunity for transformational change."

Tilly Metz - Member of the European Parliament

In collaboration with the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) we wrote a letter to the **Cancer Mission Board** and Assembly, to the Directorate-General Research and Innovation and to the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) of the European Parliament to share our reflections on the interim report of the Mission Board for Cancer that was presented during our webinar by Jan-Willem van der Loo, Senior Scientific and Policy Officer at the European Commission.

We provided feedback on the public consultations organised by the European Commission for **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan,** as well as for the **New Pharmaceutical Strategy.**

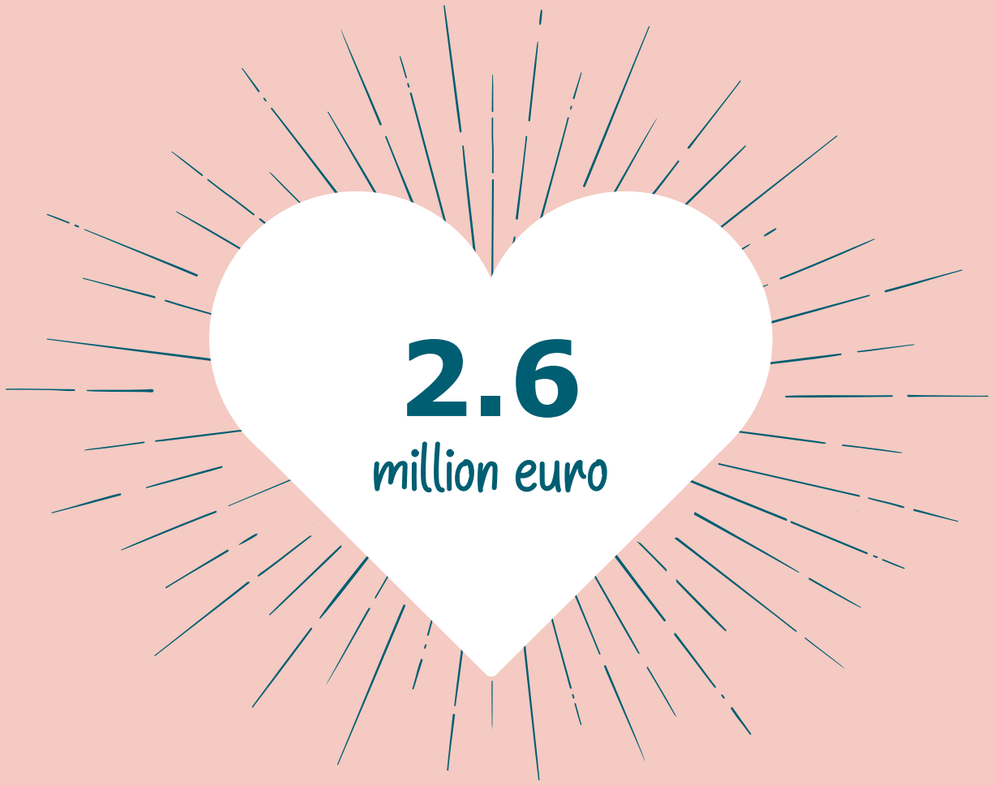
On the 1st of October 2020, during the **European Health Forum Gastein**, a key annual event bringing together politicians, experts and decision makers from the health sector, the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission organised a panel discussion on the New Pharmaceutical Strategy 2020-2025. Our managing director Lydie Meheus participated in the dialogue and put patient-centredness and drug repurposing on the table.

The **New Pharmaceutical Strategy** was officially presented at the end of November and contains a paragraph on drug repurposing. In the strategy, the launch of a call for pilot projects for off-patent repurposed drugs is announced for 2021. The Anticancer Fund participated from 2017 to 2019 in a multidisciplinary working group of the European Commission on 'Safe and Timely Access to Medicines for Patients' (STAMP) that initiated this pilot project. This demonstrates the voice of the Anticancer Fund is heard in the European decision-making.

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

How you helped us to leverage our impact

In 2020, we received a total of **2.6 million euro** from individual donors, legacies, entrepreneurs, companies and other non-profit initiatives. We are very grateful to our generous donors, who are making a difference in the lives of people suffering from cancer today and of those who may face it tomorrow.



How we can defeat cancer

The expenses of the Anticancer Fund and Reliable Cancer Therapies (*) amounted to **1.8 million euro**. We mostly invested in cancer research and clinical trials, as we believe science is our power to defeat cancer.

45%
Research and clinical trials

14%
Patient information: My Cancer Navigator

14%
Fundraising & Communication

5%
Policy projects

11%
Knowledge building

11%
Operational costs

(*) Reliable Cancer Therapies is the Swiss non-profit organisation managed by the Anticancer Fund.

MORE WAYS TO SUPPORT US

A lasting legacy

Did you know you can leave your legacy to us? Last year we received an amount of **536,000 euro** from men and women who named us as beneficiary in their will or their life insurance. If you want to dedicate a part of your legacy, we can help you take the necessary steps.

HOW TO LEAVE US YOUR LEGACY >

Donate with paypal

We added **PayPal** to our website, so that people willing to donate, can do so immediately, in a few clicks.

For corporate donations

Last year our organisation became eligible for YourCause, an international software platform that supports corporate philanthropy. YourCause provides a transparent donation model **to connect corporate donors with charities and foundations**, and coordinates employee engagement for companies. Thanks to this, we receive donations from IBM-employees and -retirees worldwide.

Tax-effective giving

We joined **Transnational Giving Europe** (TGE), a philanthropy-network covering 21 countries and providing a secure and tax-effective cross-border framework for donations. This way, European citizens can support us online while benefiting directly from the tax advantages in their country of residence.

Entrepreneurs with a heart

Anticancer Fund

For years entrepreneurs have been supporting us. Our founder Luc Verelst and Filip Balcaen are our major recurrent donors who committed, because they want to bring leading changes in the battle against cancer. They are joined by more entrepreneurs, big manufacturers and small suppliers alike, who know that every little bit helps.

They are our Entrepreneurs with a heart.
Like Bart Verhaeghe.

BART VERHAEGHE

Chairman of LakeSprings and President of Club Brugge

"Cancer affects us all. We all know someone who fights against this awful disease, or someday, we're confronted with it ourselves. Investing in the most promising research and therapies, and giving the right information to patients and their loved ones, the Anticancer Fund really makes a difference, for so many people. That's why I support the Anticancer Fund."

Would you like to become an Entrepreneur with a heart and support our good cause sustainably? Or are you willing to manifest the values of your company through sponsorship? We have developed different possibilities of recurring donations. Tell us your story and how you want to be involved in philanthropy. It's up to you.

MORE ABOUT BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR WITH A HEART >

Anticancer Fund

THE POWER OF GIVING

We are very grateful you stand with us and support us in the battle against cancer. **You contributed more than 2.6 million euro in 2020.**

For every euro spent

45 cent went to promising research
Because we think outside the box to cure cancer

14 cent went to personalised patient information
Because we care about cancer patients

5 cent went to policy engagement
Because we want to make sure the voice of the patient is heard

Thanks to your generosity, your trust and your commitment, our mission continues. **We will defeat cancer, guided by science, driven by patients and powered by your donations.**

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