

Pioneering science in Sophia

The Côte d'Azur is one of the leading centres of disease research in France

Continued from front page. "The kidneys are extremely important, as they filter about 180 litres of blood a day" he explains. "When certain cells in the kidney lose the ability to mechanically sense the flow of this blood, then large cysts can form, and eventually the patient can develop kidney failure. At the moment, the only remedy for the disease is dialysis or trans-



Dr. Enzo Lalli is investigating a rare form of cancer at Sophia

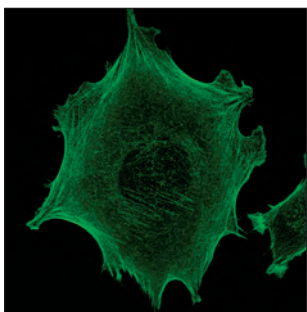
plant. I want to know how a defect in the cells which sense mechanical force can lead to such a debilitating disease". Dr Sharif-Naeini plans to use his \$25,000 prize money to pay off his student debts and attend international conferences.

It is not just high quality academic research which makes the Cote d'Azur a hub of innovative research, the region also boasts over 260 bioscience companies, of which 48% are actively involved in research and development across a broad range of topics, from developing acne cures, to creating clinical 3D imaging applications for cancer diagnosis. In 2006 Sophia-Antipolis was identified as the best area in France for investing in and

fostering collaborations between industry and research. This approach has certainly been successful for health research in the area, where public research institutes are situated in close proximity to big-pharma businesses, and rapid translation of research from 'bench to bedside' is encouraged.

One successful collaboration initiative is 'ORPHEME', a programme which funds the development of new diagnostic services and treatments for rare and evolving human diseases, such as idiopathic juvenile arthritis, malaria, and chikungunya, a deadly virus spread by the increasingly common tiger mosquito.

The initiative also funds research into orphan diseases, very rare conditions which affect so few people they are traditionally unattractive to large pharmaceutical companies. Dr Enzo Lalli and his team at the IPMC are investigating the cause of one



Pires-6: one of the cell types that Dr. Sharif-Naeini is working on

such orphan disease, a rare form of cancer of the adrenal gland, termed adrenocortical cancer. On average fewer than two Europeans in every million will develop the disease, and one reason this

cancer is so rare is because it tends to develop in very young infants; children who



Dr Sharif-Naeini is examining the cause of polycystic kidney disease

develop adrenocortical tumours have only a 55% chance of surviving for 5 years. "Childhood adrenocortical tumours are usually rare, but in children from southern Brazil they can be 10 to 15 times more common" says Dr Lalli. "This is because some Brazilian children inherit a genetic mutation which increases the likelihood of developing the disease". The region continues to attract and train young scientists; Katie Ayers came all the way from New Zealand to study for a PhD at the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis. She was awarded a special Marie Curie Early Stage Training Scholarship, one of ten at the University which is specifically designed to attract international research students with potential. Katie works in the laboratory of Dr. Pascal Théron, where she studies genes and proteins which are involved in development and cancer. She uses various techniques to look at mutations in fruitflies, which

at first might seem strange for someone interested in human disease and development.



However, gene pathways are surprisingly similar between us and fruitflies, so this kind of basic research is essential and often leads to major discoveries in the mechanisms of human disease development. The Nobel Prize has even been awarded for important discoveries first made in fruitflies, and it is crucial that talented new researchers like Katie continue to be trained in this field.

So it seems that the Côte d'Azur, which has long been

famed for its fun and glamorous side, has become a serious leader in human health and disease research.

Alexandra Dedman

CNRS- Centre national de la recherche scientifique, the largest government research agency in France, and Europe's largest basic science agency. It funds work in Sophia Antipolis.

INSERM- Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale, France's public funding body which is entirely dedicated to biological, medical and public health research.

ORPHEME: Orphan diseases and emerging pathologies, a competitive clusters which funds initiatives into 4 areas of research, infectious and tropical diseases, Care and support for the aging population, neurological diseases and disability, Rare and aggressive cancers: new tools for personalized medicine, and Medical devices and bio-engineering. For more information go to www.orpHEME.org

Tax increases in Nice

IT'S LESS than a year since Christian Estrosi became mayor but he is already increasing taxes for Nice. For next year the *taxe d'habitation* will increase, as well as the *taxe foncière*. If someone is living in their own apartment or house, they must pay both. In Nice, these taxes haven't been increased since 1996, and now they will increase by 15%. For an average family living in their own apartment, the increase could be up to 100 euro per year.

As Estrosi explained during a press conference, this increase should have been at least 22%, because of the disastrous economic situation of the town.

Llorca leaves Le Moulin

ALAIN LLORCA, the two Michelin star chef formerly of the Negresco took over the *Le Moulin de Mougins* from the legendary Roger Vergé in 2003. Now, six years later, after differences of opinion with the shareholders, he is moving on to buy his own premises in Vallauris, Le Café Llorca. *Le Moulin de Mougins* continues business as usual.

Lufthansa has the wind in its sails

The German airline adds to its impressive sporting record

Lufthansa and Longtze Yachts have decided to join forces for the new Longtze European Tour, a circuit which will encompass the Primo Cup in Monaco from the 12-15th February.

The Chinese Longtze Yachts was established in 2007 during the America's Cup campaign led by Le Defi under the China Team colours. Sailors and designers had taken advantage of 10 years of America's Cup experience to develop a new, ultra performance, high-tech boat. Since its launching, the Longtze Premier has graced waters in Europe and Asia. The prototypes won the China Cup in 2007. In 2008, the production series boat accomplished a double victory in Hong-Kong whilst also



making a statement in Europe, bringing home victories in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland.

The German company has been involved with sports for several years now at a international level in handball, football, and the Olympic and Paralympic games.

This is in addition to the company's activities here in France where they have been involved during recent years with professional tennis and polo (Saint-Tropez Polo Club). This year Lufthansa has prolonged their sporting sponsorship by hoisting their colors on Longtze Premier sails for the occasion of the Longtze European regattas.

This choice demonstrates the sharing of common values in a sport synonymous with performance, innovation, emotion and a respect for the environment.



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