

LifeSciences

Insight

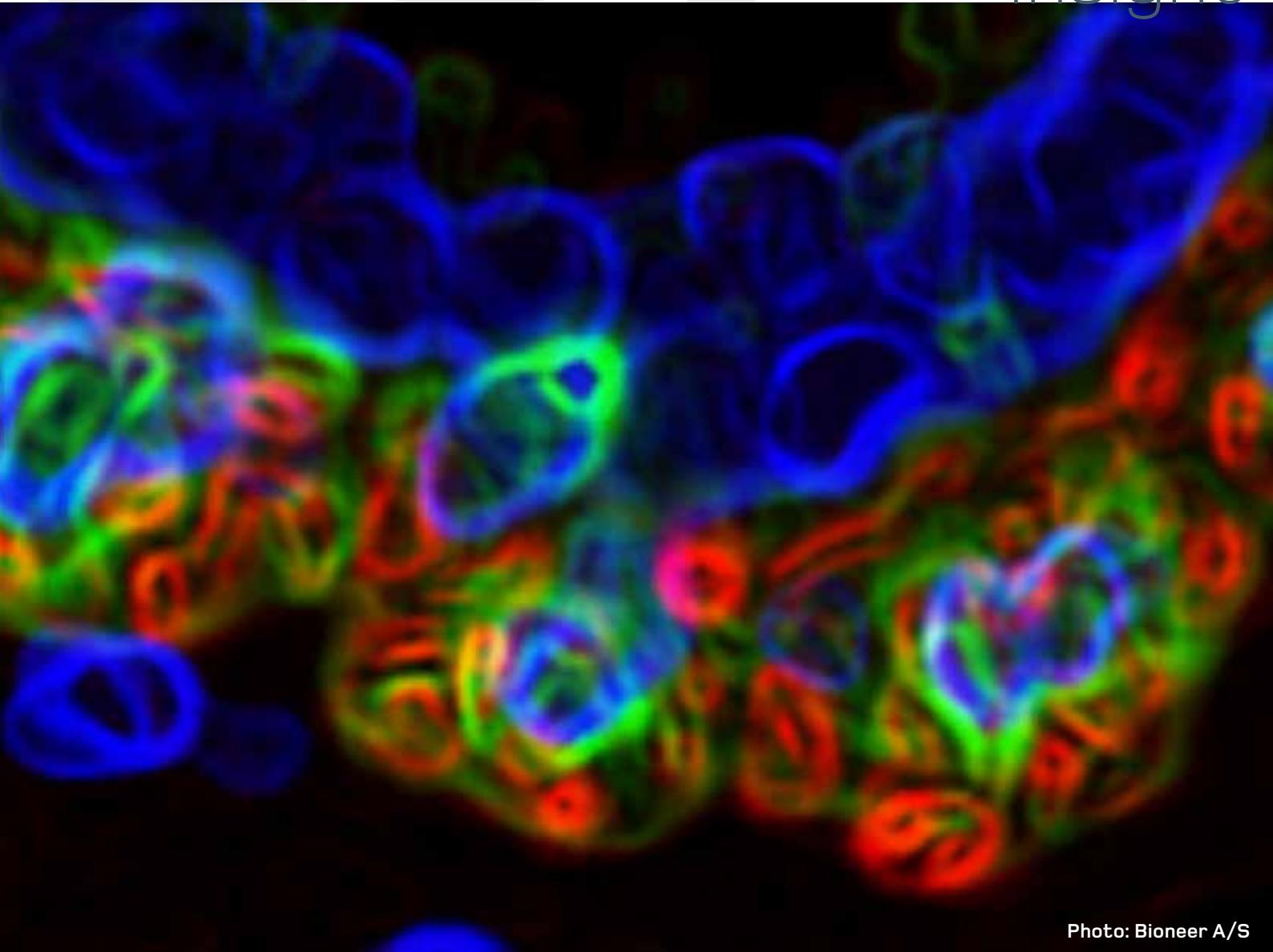


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medicon valley alliance

Creating Opportunities

How can the **cancer research** cluster in the Øresund Region help tomorrow's investors?

In the year 2030, one in two Swedes will get cancer during their lifetime. The main reason is that we are living longer, but a number of bad health habits also take their toll. Smoking, poor diet, too much alcohol and too little exercise interplay with socio-economic factors leading to a higher incidence among unemployed people with low income and little education.

The challenge is therefore a strong focus on prevention, and the good message is that around 30 per cent of all new cancer cases can be prevented, provided that we have the political will to change our attitudes profoundly regarding the above-mentioned lifestyle factors.

Swedish cancer care is among the very best. Regardless of cancer type, Sweden can demonstrate some of the highest survival figures in the world. However, in recent years the rate of improvement in survival has decreased in Sweden compared to other western countries. Until around ten years ago, Swedish cancer research, both clinical and experimental, ranked in the top five, regardless of how quality was estimated. Unfortunately, we have begun losing ground, especially in the field of clinical cancer research.



Baton with Points of View

"The Baton" is a point of View feature about life science in Medicom Valley. It is written by business people, researchers, politicians and opinion-shapers with a personal and extensive commitment to Medicom Valley. The holder of the Baton passes it on to a new person along with one or more questions related to life science in Medicom Valley.

Carsten Rose gives the relay baton to Jannik Hilsted, Medical Director, Rigshospitalet, Denmark. The question that Carsten Rose will pose to Jannik Hilsted is: "Life Science in the Øresund Region: Fact or Fiction?"



Carsten Rose, Head of Division, Professor Oncology, RCC South, Sweden

In the realisation of these facts, a new national strategy for Swedish cancer care and research has been formulated. Central to this strategy is the creation of six regional cancer centres in Sweden with full responsibility for all aspects of the cancer problem from prevention, diagnosis, primary and secondary therapy to rehabilitation, palliation, research and education. With a strong focus on patient needs a large number of cancer diagnoses are now described in a process-oriented manner not only to achieve rapid diagnosis and optimal therapy but also to ensure each patient's possibilities for rehabilitation and participation in clinical studies.

The regional cancer centre for southern Sweden (Region Skaane, Region Halland, the Municipality of Kronoberg and the Municipality of Blekinge) was the first-founded Regional Cancer Centre in Sweden



The Kite is a symbol for RCC South, Sweden.

and has since been the major player in the formulation of an overall strategy to optimise survival figures for Swedish cancer patients and reinstitute a strong focus on translational and clinical cancer research.

A number of important infrastructural improvements have greatly enhanced the chances for success in the fulfilment of the goals of RCC South. Important examples are the creation of an outstanding regional bio bank closely connected to the Cancer Register and the Registry for Quality Assurance for the various cancer diagnoses in the catchment area for RCC South. A modern radiation therapy unit is under construction at Skaane University Hospital with a future close collaboration with the MAX Lab IV (synchrotron radiation) and European Spallation Source (neutron radiation). This will create possibilities for developing new insights into radiotherapy which have probably never been seen before.

Another very important achievement has been the foundation of the IMV (Ideon Medicon Village). Situated only a ten-minute walk from Skaane University Hospital, access to top-notch laboratory facilities has allowed RCC South to argue for and, in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine at Lund University, concentrate the international competitive experimental cancer research laboratories from both Malmö and Lund in close proximity with the Cancer Register and Quality Assurance Unit of RCC South and the Skaane Regional Biobank at IMV.

On both the Danish and the Swedish sides of the Øresund there has been a long tradition for great achievements in the field of clinical cancer research, as exemplified by the internationally recognised results in the area of breast cancer.

For a number of reasons, this leading position has been weakened over the years, and the current situation is unsatisfactory – for our patients, health-care providers, the scientific community and the medical industry. The strategy for RCC South is therefore to focus, stimulate and facilitate the execution of clinical research in connection with the high-quality, population-based registers and the experimental cancer researchers. One practical example is a new agreement between Copenhagen University Hospital – Rigshospitalet and Skaane University Hospital regarding collaboration on phase I-II studies in cancer and haematology. By accepting the referral of patients between the two independent phase I-II units, these types of studies will be able to recruit from a patient catchment area of around four million people in connection with easy access to global characterisation of patient tumour tissue and serum samples. Not only will this approach be an advantage to major medical companies, it will also give small biotech

companies, in particular, access to easier testing of innovative new molecules.

The Øresund Region seems to have the potential to be one of the strongest and most innovative regions in Europe in all aspects of life science. Connected by the bridge, there is a strong political will in both Denmark and Sweden to greatly improve and optimise cancer care and cancer research. Unique facilities for biobanking in connection with highly recognised population-based registers allow safe and swift transition of new achievements in laboratories to clinical and practical testing before new inventions can be internationally marketed. Continuous improvement and education of both clinicians and researchers as well as improvement in our fundraising ability should make the region even more attractive to young talents, thereby ensuring collaboration, growth and competitiveness. ■

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