



Director's response to the Section of Infections Review (3–4 February 2020)

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Infections and Cancer Biology (ICB) Group

1A - Overall assessment of ICB's scientific quality

“Past performance and future plans of ICB: outstanding”

- ICB future plans were considered **outstanding** for projects A and C and **outstanding to forefront** for project B by the review panel:
 - Project A: Characterization of the biological properties of oncogenic viruses in *in vitro* and *in vivo* experimental models
 - Project B: Development of diagnostic tools for additional infectious agents
 - Project C: Epidemiological studies on oncogenic viruses

Infections and Cancer Biology (ICB) Group

1B - Assessment of the relevance of ICB's work to the mission of IARC

"Perfect fit"

- "Mechanistic studies from the ICB are a key component to IARC's mission to assess the role of pathogens in human cancers, and prevent, diagnose and treat these cancers
- In this context, the interplay between ICB and Infections and Epidemiology Group (ICE) has evolved to be even stronger in the last five years and is likely to continue to flourish
- This is considered to be a fundamental strength of the INF Section, which was also recognized by the trainees of the Infection Section as a strong benefit."

Infections and Cancer Biology (ICB) Group

2 - Overall recommendations for ICB

“Overall, we support ICB at the highest level”

- *We strongly endorse the recruitment of a mechanistic scientist to succeed Dr. Tommasino. The IARC should start looking for such a person in time to allow for a smooth transition and not lose the highly motivated spirit present within the INF Section and the ICB Group.*
- *The Review Panel recommends that IARC partners with the “Structure Fédérative de Recherche (SFR) Santé Lyon-Est”, which is a Core Research Platform that provides access to high-tech shared services like FACS, imaging, MS, NGS, and animal facilities. Access to these technologies is essential to the ICB and will, in the long run, provide significant cost savings to IARC. The last recommendation is that the ICB is provided a skilled bioinformatician.*
 - **Response: Budget restrictions currently impose a moratorium on the replacement of high-ranking scientists**
 - **Response: Contact has been established with SRF to have access to additional laboratory facilities that are not available at IARC**

Infections and Epidemiology (ICE) Group

1A - Overall assessment of ICE's scientific quality

“Past performance and future plans of ICE: outstanding”

- ICE future plans, described as «impactful and consistent with IARC's mission” by review panel, have since been confirmed in 2022-23 project and budget proposals:
 - Evaluation of HPV vaccination impact in low- and middle-income countries
 - *Helicobacter pylori* infection and gastric cancer project – from etiology to implementation research
 - HIV and cancer: Epidemiology and prevention in the cART era
 - Infection-attributable cancer burden: global and local

Infections and Epidemiology (ICE) Group

1B - Assessment of the relevance of ICE's work to the mission of IARC

"Perfect fit"

- *"ICE's portfolio of activities benefits... low and middle-income countries (LMICs)... directly by providing expertise... on controlling infections that lead to cancer via improved diagnostics, immunization and screening... provides capacity building and knowledge transfer..."*
 - Multicentre molecular epidemiological studies in LMIC (e.g. HPV vaccine impact assessment studies in Bhutan, Rwanda, Armenia, Uganda)
- *"Collaborative links with ICB, CSU: robust research program with unequivocal international impact."*
 - Program of global infection-attributable cancer burden, updating with new data and improving methodology (in collaboration with CSU)
 - ICE molecular epidemiological studies rely on ICB virological testing platform
- *"Central hub for multi-centre collaborations of data and biospecimen sharing..."*
 - Meta-analyses and collaborative pooled analyses

Infections and Epidemiology (ICE) Group

2 - Overall recommendations for ICE

“Overall, we support ICE at the highest level”

- *We strongly endorse the restoration of the original number of P positions to maintain a critical core of investigators in this important area and allow retention and promotion.*
- *The transition to new ICE leadership with Dr Gary Clifford has gone well. Dr Clifford is a strong and caring leader and the group is harmonious and functions well.”*
 - *Response: A new regular budget funded P2 position has been assigned in 2022/23 budget, pending approval by GC. This position is envisaged to strengthen capacity in *Helicobacter pylori* and gastric cancer research*
 - *Response: The ICE group will continue to play a critical role as part of the wider Early Detection, Prevention and Infections (EPR) Branch, in which Dr Gary Clifford will continue to have a prominent leadership role*

Infections Section (INF)

Overall recommendations for INF

“Overall, we support INF at the highest level”

- There is a strong consensus that **INF is an essential component** fostering the mission of IARC
- Both ICB and ICE are **very strong on their own** and there is **added value in the synergy** between the two Groups, mechanistic research complementing epidemiological research
- The Review Panel **supports consideration of synergies** between INF and other investigators in IARC with overlapping activities

Thank you!