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Heinrich Heine

HEINRICH HEINE
UNIVERSITÄT DÜSSELDORF

MAGAZINE

OF HEINRICH HEINE UNIVERSITY DÜSSELDORF



HHU EXPANDS
SERVICE OFFER
FOR STUDENTS

► **SURROGACY:**
When the mother
lives abroad...

► **HIGH BLOOD SUGAR:**
Cough mixture
helps diabetics

► **SUSPECTED EBOLA:**
Acid test for
Special Isolation Unit

Editorial



Photo: Hanne Horn

Dear Reader

It is about three months since we published the first issue of our HHU magazine and sent it to you. And today I am very pleased to be able to present already the second issue with exciting news about current topics and developments at Heinrich Heine University.

One of the main events in the last weeks was the inauguration of the new Student Services Centre. The new building, which is made of concrete, steel and a lot of glass, was designed by Aachen architects kadawittfeldarchitektur and combines transparent, open and inviting aesthetics with high functionality. The building was tailored specifically to the needs of Heinrich Heine University and expands by a considerable degree the University's already extensive service offer.

In future, the building will serve as the first point of contact for students from at home and abroad, prospective students as well as visitors to Heinrich Heine University, as can already be seen from its location: From its position on Universitätsstrasse and the main axis of the campus, it visibly connects the two sites of HHU on the one hand and Düsseldorf University Hospital on the other.

The building houses an extensive service offer, which includes everything to do with applications, enrolment, leave of absence, de-registration as well as examinations, and all the right contact persons are on hand. The range of services also includes coaching, psychological counselling and all students

need to know about studying abroad. The International Office has also moved into new offices here.

What was important to us with the open and communicative architecture of the new SSC was at the same time to create a meeting point for students. Here they can find modern temporary workstations and rooms for workshops. In addition, events by the Student Academy on career planning, foreign languages and other key qualifications are held.

Dear Reader, I would be very pleased to be able to welcome you one day to Heinrich Heine University and to show you personally our new rooms so that you can convince yourself of the unusual architecture, the pleasant atmosphere and the extensive service offer! I cordially invite you to visit us!

I wish you an enjoyable read and all of us continued productive cooperation at international level!

Yours sincerely

Professor Andrea von Hülsen-Esch
Vice-President for International Relations

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Photo: stocksy.com – Alita Ong

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Each month the “Asella Report” arrives by email

The Hirsch Institute of Tropical Medicine in Düsseldorf and Arsi University in Ethiopia

It is the youngest addition to Ethiopia’s education landscape: Arsi University with its five faculties. The university was consciously designed as a regional university and emerged in 2014 out of Adama Science & Technology University, of which the Faculty of Medicine (including a hospital) moved to the new institution. The Department of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectiology of Düsseldorf University Hospital has now signed a cooperation agreement with the new university.

VON ROLF WILLHARDT

The agreement is not just concerned with research work undertaken by the tropical institute but also with further training for Ethiopian medical personnel. Professor Dieter Häussinger: “Local doctors indeed possess the relevant theoretical knowledge, but do not know how to operate the high-tech equipment commonly in use today.” That is why there is an intensive transfer of know-how in the shape of practical training, for example on appliances for examinations with ultrasound. “We have brought two such devices to Asella.”

The young Arsi University, reports Professor Häussinger, is hoping for help through the partnership with Düsseldorf

in establishing medical care in the vast eastern part of the country, intensive further training for medical staff and the further development of academic structures at its own College of Health Sci-

Intensive further training

ences. Another goal is a joint doctoral programme. “That’s still a vision for the future, but all kinds of things are possible.”

Professor Dieter Häussinger, Hospital Director, reaches out to the bookshelf in his office, pulls out several bursting files and shows us some thick dossiers. “These are the ‘Asella Reports’. They ar-

rive every month by email from Ethiopia and provide me with very detailed information about the work being performed at our institute. We are always completely up to date.”

The dossiers contain reports on everyday life, a kind of “clinical logbook”, for example with cost and invoicing statements, field reports on electricity supply, the state of waste disposal and the security situation. And naturally news of research work too.

Practical training for staff

Current projects are concerned with the investigation of infectious diseases which influence the health of mother and child, chronic liver diseases as well as the side effects of tuberculosis therapies.

Ethiopia (97 million inhabitants, of which 85 percent live in rural areas) is one of the countries with the highest prevalence of tuberculosis worldwide, yet the possibilities for diagnosis and treatment are inadequate. “Our tropical institute is supporting as best it can the setting up of reliable diagnostic procedures and also providing medical staff with suitable and practice-oriented training”, says Professor Häussinger. “In the framework of this support, family members, and especially the children of tuberculosis patients, are also examined specifically for the disease and then

„NATURALLY WE INVESTED THE PRIZE MONEY IN OUR TUBERCULOSIS PROJECT STRAIGHT AWAY.“

Prof. Dr. Dieter Häussinger

treated accordingly if they are infected.” These activities did not remain unnoticed and were rewarded at the end of last year with the award of the renowned Else Kröner-Fresenius Foundation: This prize, which is endowed with a large sum, was awarded to Professor Häussinger and Dr. Torsten Feldt, Senior Physician, for the tropical institute’s work in the

Prevention of infectious diseases

prevention of infectious diseases in the Arsi region. Professor Häussinger: “Naturally we invested the prize money in our tuberculosis project straight away.”

On the 20th of April, the hospital boss and Dr. Tolla Berisso, president of the partner university, signed the new cooperation agreement. The background: Arsi University has 11.500 students and five colleges, one institute and an academy. In detail: “College of Business & Eco-

nomics”, “College of Health Sciences”, “College of Social Science & Humanities”, “College of Agriculture & Environmental Science”, “College of Educational Management & Behavioral Science”, “School of Law”, “Institute of Bio-Technology” and the “Sport Academy”.

Sport is very important here: Asella, which lies on a high plateau 170 km south and four hours’ car drive away from the capital city of Addis Abeba, is regarded as the stronghold of Ethiopia’s “running miracle”. Wikipedia lists as famous “sons and daughters of the town” solely and exclusively four long-distance runners, headed by top sportsman and internationally acclaimed Haile Gebrelassie (born 1973), who is hailed in the country as a national hero and won countless marathons and races at the Olympic Games. In 1998 he was World Track and Field Athlete of the Year. Arsi University is continuing this aura of media stars; it wants its Sport Academy to be a talent pool for the national sport of long-distance running. It is not without

Photos: Private



reason that the university’s self-confident motto on its website reads: “Like our star athletes we strive to produce star intellectuals”. That’s impressive.

Dr. Frieder Pfäfflin and Dr. André Fuchs, two physicians from Düsseldorf, are currently working at the Hirsch Institute. They live together with their families in two bungalows owned by the institute; the staff too – in total 12 Ethiopians who work as drivers, security guards, cooks or secretaries – and two cars are financed from third-party funds. The exotic jobs in Asella – which are generally for one year – are high in demand at the University Hospital. According to Professor Häussinger, the criteria for this all-round job are: “Personal flexibility, sound medical expertise and familiarity with the technology and operation of state-of-the-art, high-tech medical equipment.”

The work of the Hirsch Institute is successful, no doubt about it. There is hardly any other German university na-

Photo: Private





1: Signing of the new cooperation agreement by Professor Dieter Häussinger (Hirsch Institute of Tropical Medicine, a subsidiary of the Department of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectiology of Düsseldorf University Hospital) and Dr. Tolla Berisso (President of Arsi University) together with Dr. Hipro Teno (Vice-President of Arsi University) (from left to right).

2: The staff of the tropical institute during the ESTHER Workshop, which took place from 21st to 23rd of April in Asella. One of the topics was parasitological and molecular biological diagnostics.

tionwide which maintains such an efficient subsidiary abroad. This is also perceived by the scientific community, which shows its acknowledgement in workshops and at congresses.

The hospital director does, however, have one major worry: Continuous finance. “So far, we have paid for everything from third-party funds and dona-

Goal is a foundation

tions. Thank goodness we have a large number of wonderful personal contacts. But the bottom line is that I simply go begging.” Häussinger’s long-term goal: A foundation from which the revenue will safeguard the existence of the Düsseldorf subsidiary in Ethiopia. “I’m working on it”, he says. And smiles confidently.

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Hirsch Institute of Tropical Medicine

Düsseldorf’s Hirsch Institute of Tropical Medicine was founded in 2010 in cooperation with Adama Science and Technology University (ASTU) on the campus of the Faculty of Medicine in Asella (Ethiopia). When the campus in Asella separated from ASTU in December 2014, the partnership begun with ASTU and continued very successfully until then was transferred to the newly founded Arsi University.

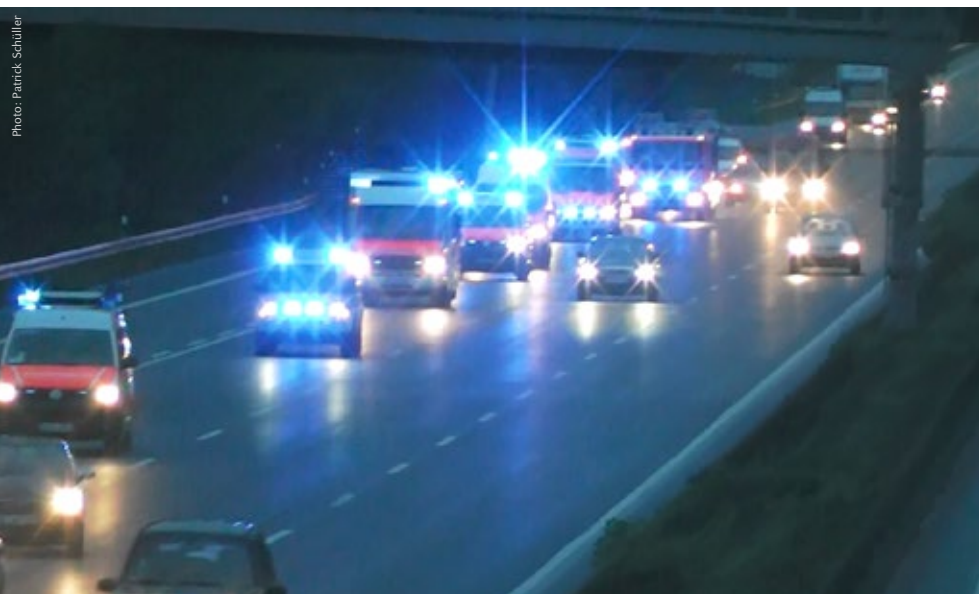
Established as a subsidiary of the Department of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectiology of Düsseldorf University Hospital, the institute’s aim is a long-term partnership in the areas of training and clinical research in the field of infectious diseases and tropical medicine.

Construction of the institute was made possible by a generous donation by Wolfgang Hirsch, a Düsseldorf entrepreneur. Its fittings and furnishings were also mostly financed from donations (amongst others from the Heinz Ansmann Foundation, the Rotary Club and several enterprises, e.g. Qiagen (biotechnology), Eppendorf (a laboratory equipment manufacturer) and Bayer (pharmaceuticals)). The Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research of North Rhine-Westphalia also contributed to financing the institute. The Hirsch Institute went into operation in October 2013.

Acid test for the Special Isolation Unit

“Ebola”: Chronology of an all-clear

BY ROLF WILLHARDT



► Sunday, 3rd of May 2015: The convoy with the patient is on its way from St. Elisabeth Hospital in Bochum to the Special Isolation Unit at Düsseldorf University Hospital. It arrives there at 2.11 a.m. on the 4th of May.

The fire station in the Düsseldorf suburb of Wersten is the closest to the University; all 85 men have undergone additional medical training for dealing with contagious patients and have practised this kind of high-security transportation for months, sometimes even every week. At 8.43 p.m. the emergency vehicles set off from Düsseldorf towards the Ruhr Valley and the patient in Bochum is collected at 11.10 p.m. On Monday, 4th of May, 0.51 a.m. he is on his way to Düsseldorf and his arrival in the Special Isolation Unit is recorded at 2.11 a.m.

The € 400.000 infection containment ambulance is used for the first time in “real life”. The vehicle is noticeably larger than a normal ambulance so that the emergency team can move around in it in their air-filled protective suits. Seven vehicles from Düsseldorf Fire Brigade form the convoy: A lead vehicle with the Head of Operations who is responsible for organizational procedures, behind it the command vehicle with the emergency doctor in charge, in the infection containment ambulance there are two medical staff in isolation suits with respirators, then a car with a second emergency doctor and paramedics, followed by a vehicle with technical equipment

The call comes on Sunday, 3rd of May, at 3.27 p.m. A hospital in Bochum alerts the Special Isolation Unit at Düsseldorf University Hospital of a patient from Guinea with suspected Ebola. He is showing symptoms of the sickness which suggest that he is infected. That means: An emergency. What has been practised countless times is now becoming reality: The 41 year-old man from West Africa must be transported to Düsseldorf for treatment.

The Special Isolation Unit, the only one in North Rhine-Westphalia, is part of the Department of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectiology of the University Hospital. With its three isolation beds, it is an integral part of the regional gov-

ernment’s Pandemic Alarm Plan. Following the call from Bochum, a telephone chain is triggered and doctors and nursing staff informed. Hospital Director Professor Dieter Häussinger’s cell phone rings at 3.57 p.m. It is a “long weekend”,

Unit is „initialized“

the 1st of May was a Friday; some of the Unit’s team are on holiday yet voluntarily report for duty after the call. The Special Isolation Unit is “initialized” and made ready to admit the patient. This takes just a couple of hours. At 7.00 p.m. the Unit is ready.

At operational level, the Unit gets in touch at 4.30 p.m. with the fire brigade.

for “unforeseen events”, a transport vehicle carrying materials and a fire engine with five officers. The convoy of flashing blue lights is accompanied by the police. Overall, 18 emergency personnel are involved, including Dr. Frank Sensen, the city’s Chief Emergency Physician, who until recently was himself a medical relief worker in the Ebola crisis zone.

Once in the unit, a blood sample is taken from the patient and immediately sent by courier to the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine in Hamburg, which houses one of the two centres in Germany for Ebola diagnostics. In the Unit in Düsseldorf, eight doctors, 14 nursing staff and two coordinators are now treating the patient around the clock. Two doctors and two nursing staff are in attendance in the patient’s room throughout. They wear positive-pressure isolation suits, which protect them for a maximum of three hours, and communicate with each other and the coordinator in the Unit’s control centre via radio.

As it turns out, the man from Guinea sat all day on a bus journey in his home country next to a woman with suspected Ebola. On 24th of April he flew back to Europe, first to Paris and then to Düsseldorf, from where he flew on to Sri Lanka and finally he returned from there on the 2nd of May to Düsseldorf. One day later he presented himself at St. Elisabeth Hospital in Bochum, displaying typical Ebola symptoms.

Contact via radio

Late on Monday afternoon, the news arrives from Hamburg: It is not Ebola; the PCR result is clearly negative. PCR stands for Polymerase Chain Reaction. It is one of the most important methods in modern molecular biology. The Guinean is suffering from malaria, which the Unit’s doctors had already taken into consideration as a differential diagnosis after the first phone call from Bochum

and recommended that their colleagues there commence immediately with anti-malaria medication before transporting the patient to Düsseldorf.

“No Ebola patient in the University Hospital” reads the title in the press release issued jointly and at the same time by Düsseldorf’s Department of Health and the University Hospital in the late afternoon. Professor Dieter Häussinger, Hospital Director, is quoted as saying: “We are naturally very happy that the patient has not contracted Ebola. Transport, admission to hospital, diagnostics and patient care in the Special Isolation Unit all ran smoothly and according to plan.” And this statement from Professor Andreas Meyer-Falcke, Chief Health Officer of NRW’s capital city: “I would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work and meticulous preparation.”

By this time it is back to business as usual in the Special Isolation Unit, which the patient from Guinea is able to leave on the 8th of May.

Photos: Stefan Boxnick



Staff can only work in their special protective suits for a maximum of three hours. Two doctors and two nursing staff were in attendance in the suspected Ebola patient’s room throughout. They communicated with each other via radio.

When the surrogate mother lives abroad...

Surrogacy and child wellbeing: What is the legal situation?



Illustration: Jakob Vogel from The Neun Project

Unwanted childlessness has increased considerably over the past decades. In Germany, about two million couples are affected. Every seventh couple is at risk of childlessness for biological or medical reasons. In order to fulfil their desire for offspring, around 200.000 couples in Germany turn to reproductive medical treatment each year, such as egg donation, embryo donation and surrogacy. Abroad.

BY ROLF WILLHARDT

Cross-border surrogacy is currently one of the most challenging and complex problems in international family law”, reported Professor Katharina Hilbig-Lugani (Civil Law) in her inaugural lecture on the 12th of May. Her theme: “Surrogacy and child wellbeing – A wind of change in old international procedural and private law issues.”

Whether and under what conditions German “intended parents” who availed themselves of the services of a surrogate mother abroad count as legal parents was the initial question.

“By surrogacy”, such is Professor Hilbig-Lugani’s definition of the term, “such cases are to be understood where a woman undergoes artificial insemination or an embryo created in vitro is implanted and she hands over the child conceived in this way after the birth in accordance with an agreement reached with the intended parents prior to conception.”

The procedure and the genetic relationship, she says, could be quite different. “In the first scenario, the egg cell of the intended mother is fertilized with the sperm of the intended

father and then transferred to the surrogate mother. In this case, there is a genetic relationship between both of the intended parents and the child.” In a second and third scenario, it is the egg cell of a third party or of the surrogate mother which is fertilized with the sperm of the intended father. Here there is a genetic relationship between the intended father and the child.

Procedure is described in the Old Testament

Hilbig-Lugani: “It should be noted that for this third surrogacy scenario we do not require any modern reproductive technology. It is a procedure already described in the Old Testament: In the first book of Moses, Chapter 30, in the story of Rachel, who was unable to bear children for Jacob and therefore ordered that he should go to her maid who should then – particularly figuratively – give birth on Ra-

And she said: Behold my maid Bilhah, go to her and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife and Jacob went to her and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a son.

First Book of Moses, Chapter 30, 3–5



Photo: stocksy.com – Alta Ong

chel's knees. In this way, Rachel had two sons through Bilhah, her maid."

In a fourth scenario, the egg cell of the intended mother is fertilized with sperm from a third party and implanted in the surrogate mother. In this case, there is a genetic relationship between the intended mother and the child. "In the fifth and sixth scenario, it is the egg cell of a third party or the surrogate mother which is fertilized with sperm from a third party. In these cases, there is no genetic relationship between either of the intended parents and the child."

Surrogacy: A young phenomenon

Professor Hilbig-Lugani observes that "with the exception of the scenario in the Old Testament", surrogacy is a relatively young phenomenon. "The first case which became publicly known of surrogacy arranged commercially through an agency was in the USA in 1980. Since then, a veritable market for surrogacy has developed. (...) The medical technology required is not reserved for wealthy industrialized nations but available more or less everywhere. (...) Surrogacy is allowed, for example, in India, the Ukraine, Russia, Albania, Georgia, Mexico, various states in the USA, Australia as well as in some European countries: Greece, Great Britain and the Nether-

lands allow it provided there is judicial authorization and it is not commercial."

In Germany, the situation is different. "In the 1980s, when medical methods were correspondingly advanced, surrogacy was practiced in West Germany. At the end of the eighties, the German legislature began to regulate this area. Since then, German law is dominated by the prohibition of surrogacy: In terms of civil law, contracts of which the object is surrogacy are null and void; the physician who undertakes the surrogacy procedure is liable for prosecution and damages. The agency which arranges the surrogacy is also liable for prosecution. (...) Not liable for prosecution are the intended parents and the surrogate mother." Similar rules also apply, for example, in France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Turkey.

Hilbig-Lugani explains: "The tenor in Germany is the same today as it was in the late 1980s: Thus the exact wording in the Coalition Agreement of the Grand Coalition of 2013 reads: 'We reject surrogacy because it is incompatible with human dignity.'"

But what if the surrogate mother lives abroad? A case which led to a radical decision by the Federal Supreme Court caused a furore and made the headlines in 2014.

Hilbig-Lugani: "Two male registered partners of German nationality with their habitual abode in Germany entered into a surrogacy contract in 2010 with a surrogate mother in



„TOO OFTEN IN THE PAST THE WELLBEING OF THE CHILD WAS PLAYED DOWN IN CONCRETE CASES ON PRESUMABLY MOSTLY GENERAL PREVENTIVE GROUNDS.“

Prof. Dr. Katharina Hilbig-Lugani

Professor Katharina Hilbig-Lugani (born 1979) has taught Civil Law at the Faculty of Law of Heinrich Heine University since 2014.

California. According to the contract, the woman was to deliver a child conceived in vitro with sperm from one of the partners and an egg cell donated anonymously. California permits surrogacy and regulates it in detail. The contract was fulfilled and in May 2011 the surrogate mother in California gave birth to a child. Shortly before the birth – in accordance with legal provisions – a Californian court examined the case and ruled that the partners, but not the surrogate mother, were the parents of the child to be delivered by the surrogate mother. Also before the birth, the partner whose sperm had been used to conceive the child had acknowledged paternity before the German Consulate in San Francisco with the agreement of the surrogate mother. The partners travelled to Berlin with the child and tried unsuccessfully to register the birth abroad at the Register Office; this was also refused by the Local Court and the Superior Court of Justice. They therefore filed an appeal with the Federal Supreme Court.”

And this court delivered a judgement which hit the headlines. The Twelfth Civil Senate ruled on the 10th of December 2014 that the Californian court ruling whereby the “intended parents” of a child born of a surrogate mother must be legally acknowledged in Germany as its parents, although this ultimately does not comply with German law.

Foreign decisions in family issues – with the exception of divorce cases – are categorically acknowledged by German law without there being a need for a special procedure. However, such acknowledgement is excluded if a decision leads to an outcome which is clearly irreconcilable with the key principles of German law, which is particularly the case when

such acknowledgement is irreconcilable with fundamental rights (what is known as “public policy exception”).

Both the Federal Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights have emphasized in particular the right of a child to be able to substantiate under specific circumstances a legal parent-child relationship. Non-acknowledgement of the ruling of the Californian court could lead – as it was termed by the Federal Supreme Court – to a “limping family relationship” and thus to disadvantages for the child concerned.

Noteworthy court decision

The decision of the Federal Supreme Court is insofar noteworthy since it explicitly allows a deviation from German law by the Californian court and acknowledges its ruling and the consequences for Germany. For many childless couples – whether homosexual or heterosexual – who are contemplating surrogacy abroad it is likely to be of far-reaching significance.

Professor Hilbig-Lugani: “Too often in the past the wellbeing of the child was played down in concrete cases on presumably mostly general preventive grounds. The ruling of the Federal Supreme Court of December 2014 has taken an important step towards giving more weight to the wellbeing of the child in such problematic cases, but there is still a long journey ahead which is not completely possible without legislature.”

Cough mixture helps diabetics

Improvement of blood sugar in type 2 diabetes

Dextromethorphan, an active ingredient in many over-the-counter cough suppressants, improves the blood sugar level in patients with type 2 diabetes. This is what researchers at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf and Düsseldorf University Hospital, in cooperation with Profil Institut für Stoffwechselforschung GmbH, have discovered in the framework of tests with mice and humans. Their results have been published in the online version of the “Nature Medicine” journal.

The hormone insulin is critical

The hormone insulin is critical to sugar metabolism in the body: If there is a lack of insulin, the blood sugar level rises. Hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) can lead to a life-threatening blood sugar imbalance or multiple organ damage in the long term. Diabetes patients are often obliged to take medication which stimulates insulin production. As the illness progresses, many of them must check their blood sugar level several times a day and control it – depending on their food intake – by injecting insulin.

In the article published in Nature Medicine, the researchers in Düsseldorf and their cooperation partners show that the active ingredient dextromethorphan prompts what are known as beta cells in the pancreas to produce more insulin

when the blood sugar level is too high. The blood sugar level in the test persons is improved and in particular peaks in blood sugar concentration are reduced.

The experiments indicate that dextromethorphan fortifies the beta cells in the pancreas which produce insulin and possibly protects them from cell death. This could improve patients’ condition in the long term, since diabetes often worsens over the course of time as beta cells give off less and less insulin or die off altogether. Type 1 diabetics – whose beta cells die through an autoimmune reaction – can also benefit. Professor Eckhard Lammert, Head of the Metabolic Physiology Division at HHU, says: “We will examine in the longer term and under medical supervision whether administering dextromethorphan to type 1 diabetics in the early stages of the illness can free them from the need for treatment with insulin.”

The study presented is a joint project of the Metabolic Physiology Division at Heinrich Heine University and Düsseldorf University Hospital together with the German Diabetes Center in Düsseldorf, Profil Institut für Stoffwechselforschung GmbH in Neuss, MLM Medical Labs GmbH in Mönchengladbach as well as laboratories abroad.

Arne Claussen

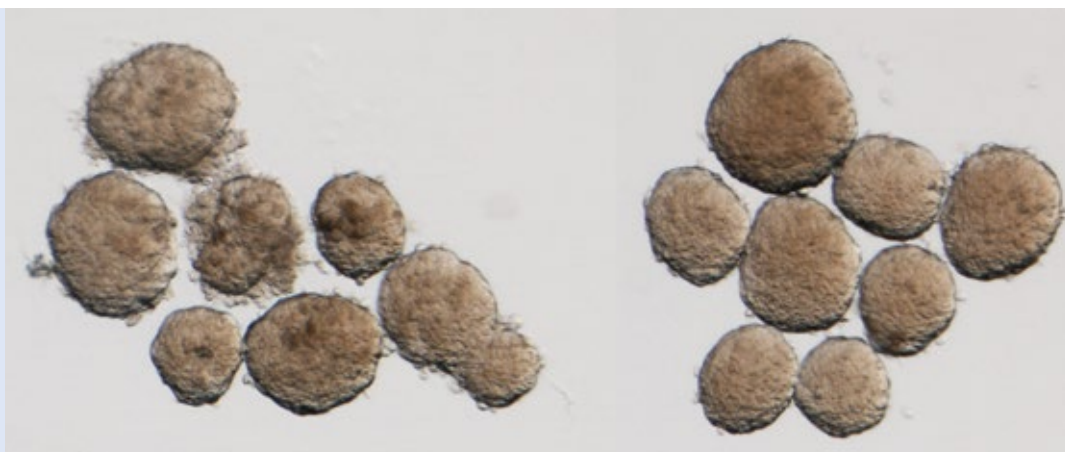
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Background information

Insulin is produced in the **islets of Langerhans**. Each islet of Langerhans is about one tenth to half a millimetre in size and comprises from several dozen to a few thousand beta cells. The human pancreas is home to about one million islets of Langerhans. On the left can be seen a group of diabetic Langerhans islets. These islets contain dead and partly functionless beta cells. On the right are shown diabetic islets which have been treated with an effective dose of dextromethorphan. These islets have less dead beta cells and produce more insulin.



The African and the European View

Project seminar on “Colonial Photography from Togo – A Transcultural Perspective”

From 1884 to 1916, the present-day republic of Togo, a small state in West Africa with 6.5 million inhabitants, was a German colony. It was then governed by France and the official language today is still French. Memories of the German colonial era, however, still remained very much alive; about 100.000 people speak German as a foreign language. At the University of Lomé, the capital city, there is an independent “Département d’Allemand” at the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines.

BY ROLF WILLHARDT

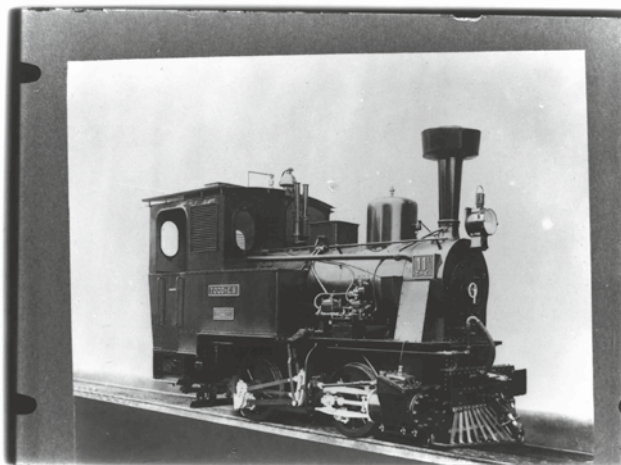
And a seminar organized by historians from Düsseldorf took place with young German Studies students from Togo: “Colonial Photography from Togo – A Transcultural Perspective” was the title of the experiment. Responsible for the pilot project at HHU were Professor Stefanie Michels (Chair of European Expansion) and Niels Hollmeier, in Togo German Studies lecturers Dr. Kokou G. Azamede was in charge, who attained his doctorate in the subject of Historical Anthropology in 2008 at the University of Bremen and has taught since 2011 at the University of Lomé.

Contact by video conference and Facebook

In continuous contact with each other either by video conference or via Facebook, thirteen students from Düsseldorf and ten from Lomé in-

terpreted selected historical photographs from the German colonial era (from the archives of the German Colonial Society which today is housed in Frankfurt University Library). They show, for example, a dance scene, a motif from corn harvesting, Togolese musicians, German technology (a locomotive) and a bare-breasted African woman.

The students, all in their early twenties, formed mixed groups. And first of all they had to get to know each other. Language was not an obstacle; the African students were – to the surprise of their colleagues from Düsseldorf – proficient in German. Catalogues of questions were compiled. “How would you interpret my appearance if you saw me on a colonial photograph?” wrote Pouwèréou Amana from Lomé and Yao Nkou wanted to know “Do you like foreigners?” Lea Eitel from Düsseldorf replied “Perhaps it is due to Germany’s past that today we again or still have to battle and xenophobia and racism in our country.”



Pictures taken in the former German colony of Togo



Professor Stefanie Michels has been chair of “European Expansion” in the Department of History since 2013. In 1998 she was awarded the Master of Arts in African Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, Great Britain. At the University of Cologne, where she attained her doctorate in 2003, she worked on “Askari – Faithful unto death”, a project of the German Research Foundation. She wrote her professorial thesis at Goethe University Frankfurt on the topic of “Black German Colonial Soldiers”. Areas of specialization in Professor Michels’ research and teaching include the history of German-African relationships, in particular between Cameroon and the regions formerly colonized by Germany of Tanzania, Ruanda, Burundi, Togo and Namibia.

The German students also had very concrete questions about colonialism: “What key terms do the Togolese students associate with colonialism?” The answer from Lomé: “Resistance, mission, trade, forced labour, relinquishment of our culture, economic and cultural exploitation.”

“German footprints”

Does colonialism continue to leave its mark on Togo? “German footprints,” is the answer, i.e. buildings, the railway, descendants with surnames such as Gruner or Doering. How is French colonial rule viewed in comparison to German? “Negatively.” And the racism of the German colonial rulers? “Instead of racism, the words used are rigour and diligence.” Highly popular are quality products from Germany such as cars and electrical appliances. And German football.

Andreas Göttmann from Düsseldorf noticed differences between the German and the Togolese interpretation of colonial photographs. One photograph showed a European in a hammock carried by two Africans. At first sight a typical motif of the superiority of the white man and of

suppression. Dr. Azamede, however, delivered another possible explanation, which was free of all radical anti-colonialism: The picture does not necessarily document a scene of suppression. Perhaps carrying the hammock was a welcome source of income? Andreas Göttmann was amazed: “That would definitely be interpreted differently in Germany.”

The ultimate goal of the project, explains Professor Michels, was the development of joint criteria for analysing the photographs from a variety of perspectives. “Students first of all had to learn to describe pictures precisely and in their

Criteria for analysing photographs

context, indeed to read them and subject them to source evaluation from both an inner and outer standpoint.” With respect to the general topic of colonialism, the German participants in the seminar naturally experienced feelings of guilt. “And there we very quickly land in a moral discourse which, however, has absolutely nothing to do with solid historical science methods.”

„We can never completely prevent a crisis, but ...“

Claudia Buch, Vice-President of the Deutsche Bundesbank, spoke on the topic of stability measures in the wake of the financial crisis

BY CAROLIN GRAPE

With the Heinrich Heine Professorship in Economics, the University and the Dr. Jost Henkel Foundation aim to create a discussion forum which devotes itself to current economic policy issues. This year, with Professor Claudia Buch, Vice-President of the Deutsche Bundesbank (German Federal Bank), a renowned economist and proven financial expert was chosen.

In her two public lectures on the 26th of January and the 8th of June as well as a seminar with Masters students of Political Economy and Business Administration, she explained the role of the Deutsche Bundesbank in safeguarding financial stability. Her remarks focussed on macro-prudential monitoring and

related measures – a new sub-topic of economics policy.

What is understood by financial stability is the ability of a financial system to fulfil its central macro-economic functions and to do this precisely in difficult situations and periods of upheaval. The financial crisis showed that problems in individual banks and market sectors have grave global consequences. The monitoring of individual institutions (micro-prudential supervision) does not, however, necessarily reveal all the risks which can endanger a financial system. That is why the Deutsche Bundesbank, together with national and international institutions, looks at the financial system in its overall complexity. Apart from banks, insurance companies, financial markets and financial

infrastructures are also in the spotlight. The objective of macro-prudential monitoring is to recognize, assess and reduce risks for the entire financial system.

In her lecture in January, Claudia Buch had analysed various systemic risks and their potential impact on financial stability. Her second lecture on the 8th of June followed on seamlessly: “What do systemic risks mean for the regulation and monitoring of banks?”

Negative spiral in asset prices

The financial expert explained with which measures what is known as “macro-prudential policy” is trying to safeguard financial stability. The main task lies in recognizing the systemic risks which evolve when the difficulties encountered by individual institutions call into question the functionality of the entire system, e.g. by a domino effect (through the difficulties encountered by an individual bank and due to direct contractual relationships the bank’s

“WE CAN NEVER COMPLETELY PREVENT A CRISIS, BUT WITH THE NEW REGULATIONS AND NEW INSTITUTIONS WE CAN MAKE SURE THAT THEY DO NOT TURN OUT TO BE SO PAINFUL AND THAT THEIR PERPETRATORS ARE HELD LIABLE.”

Claudia Buch, Bundesbank Vice-President



Photo: Ulf Oberländer

With the nomination of Professor Claudia Buch, Vice-President of the Deutsche Bundesbank, the University and the Dr. Jost Henkel Foundation chose a renowned economist and proven financial expert.

creditors themselves get into trouble) or through an information effect (the difficulties in which a specific bank finds itself triggers – even without any contractual commitments – an onslaught on other banks). A negative spiral in asset prices can equally lead to a destabilization of the whole financial system. Conversely, a system is all the more resilient the less wrong incentives, the greater the risk buffers and in particular the higher the equity capital and thus sufficient liquidity are.

Important groundwork has been laid for this since the outbreak of the crisis: New institutions and new legal parameters facilitate better monitoring and regulation of the financial world. New macro-prudential instruments, such as higher equity capital requirements for major banks as well as the Countercyclical Capital Buffer (CCB) (financial institutes must keep a capital buffer which is independent of the economic cycle,

the aim of which is to cushion any excess credit growth) contribute to consolidating the financial system.

Attention to the real estate market

Claudia Buch drew particular attention to the real estate market: Should a bubble start to loom, the Bundesbank must be able to impose constraints for real estate loans: Banks must guarantee the loans with more equity capital and house builders should not be allowed to borrow against their property completely.

Professor Buch's conclusion at the end of her lecture: "We can never completely prevent a crisis, but with the new regulations and new institutions we can make sure that they do not turn out to be so painful and that their per-

petrators are held liable. What is important is that what has been decided is now implemented. Further important steps are needed to make the reforms successful, such as an improvement in the data situation, the structured evaluation of political measures as well as independent analysis and research. An examination of the transnational impact of macro-prudential policy is one of the key challenges!"

The lecture series by this year's holder of the Heinrich Heine University Professorship in Economics on macro-prudential monitoring in theory and in economic policy practice met with a positive response and won lots of applause – no doubt also because Claudia Buch analysed it clearly and understood how to present complex and controversial contents in a way which was vivid and comprehensible for listeners who were not financial experts too.

HHU further expands its service offer for students

HHU's new SSC building officially opened

Svenja Schulze, Minister for Science, Professor Anja Steinbeck, President of HHU, Dr. Martin Chaumet, Managing Director of Bau- und Liegenschaftsbetrieb NRW (NRW's real estate agency) and Raimund Haas, Deputy Chairman of the Student Union, officially opened the new SSC building of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (HHU) in the framework of a small ceremony with members and supporters of the University and other guests. "With the new Student Services Centre, we have an impressive central gateway to the University. This applies geographically through its position on Universitätsstrasse, optically through the transparent, open and welcoming glass cube and above all in terms of its functionality: The SSC is the first and most important point of contact for students and prospective students", said Anja Steinbeck, President, on the occasion of its inauguration. As she toured the centre, Svenja Schulze, Minister for Science, was clearly impressed by the new building: "For 50 years HHU has placed its students centre stage. This can currently be seen in initiatives which make it easier for students to start their studies and lower the number who terminate their studies prematurely as well as in the new Student Services Centre. I would like to thank everyone involved for their dedication."

Professor Anja Steinbeck, President, and Professor Stefan Süß, Vice-President, together opened the door for students, prospective students and the general public.



Photos: Wilfried Meyer

The new building on Universitätsstrasse offers extensive services for students, prospective students and visitors and creates even more space for Düsseldorf University's service offer, which is already unique: Here students and prospective students from at home and abroad find comprehensive support and the right contact persons for all their questions concerning applications, enrolment, leave of absence and de-registration as well as examinations. The offer also includes coaching, psychological counselling, everything to do with studying abroad and information for prospective students. In addition, events by the Student Academy on career planning,

Modern workstations, rooms for workshops

foreign languages and other key qualifications are held. The Central Scholarship Office, the ZIM computer centre and external partners, such as the Federal Employment Agency, Düsseldorf Student Services and others, are also temporarily on hand in the SSC. Modern workstations and rooms for workshops are at students' disposal too.

kadawittfeldarchitektur in Aachen designed the building to reflect the required processes and procedures. Thus the cross-departmental service concept long established at HHU is being further developed. The continuous opening hours from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. – unique throughout the whole of NRW – have been retained

Julius Kohl

Professor Anja Steinbeck, President, and Svenja Schulze, NRW's Minister for Science, at the small opening ceremony on the 23rd of June.





House of the University

This palace in the heart of Düsseldorf has been left by the foundation van Meeteren into the hands of the Heinrich-Heine-Universität (HHU). It serves as a place of information and advice, as well as the exchange of research, culture and education.

The HHU wants to share modern research and its results within manifold events. The citizens of Düsseldorf and the surrounding area are welcome to participate and inform themselves about various possibilities. Last but not least,

the Haus der Universität (House of the University) shall bring university life into the city.

Information, programme, booking:

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