

Scientific Report

EOC-USI 2024



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List of frequently used abbreviations

AFRi	Area Formazione medica e Ricerca / Medical Education and Research Area	LRT	Laboratori di Ricerca Traslazionale / Laboratories for Translational Research
CHUV	Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois	LRU	Local Research Unit
CTU-EOC	Clinical Trial Unit EOC	ORBV	Ospedale Regionale di Bellinzona e Valli
DAEICM	Dipartimento di Anestesiologia, Medicina d'Urgenza e Terapia Intensiva / Department of Anesthesiology, Emergency and Intensive Care Medicine	ORL	Ospedale Regionale di Lugano
EOC	Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale	PI	Principal Investigator
EOLAB	Institute of Laboratory Medicine	SAKK	Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer research
ICCT	Istituto Cardiocentro Ticino / Cardiocentro Ticino Institute	SCTO	Swiss Clinical Trial Organization
ICP	Istituto Cantonale di Patologia / Cantonal Institute of Pathology	SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
ICT	Area Informatica e tecnologia della Comunicazione / Information and Communications Technology Area	SUPSI	Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera italiana
IIMSI	Istituto Imaging della Svizzera Italiana / Imaging Institute of Southern Switzerland	USI	Università della Svizzera italiana
INSI	Istituto di Neuroscienze Cliniche della Svizzera Italiana / Institute of Clinical Neurosciences of Southern Switzerland		
IOR	Institute of Oncology Research		
IOSI	Istituto Oncologico della Svizzera Italiana / Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland		
IPSI	Istituto Pediatrico della Svizzera Italiana / Institute of Pediatrics of Southern Switzerland		
IRB	Istituto di Ricerca in Biomedicina / Institute for Research in Biomedicine		
ISFSI	Istituto di Scienze Farmacologiche della Svizzera Italiana / Institute of Pharmacological Sciences of Southern Switzerland		

Preface

This annual scientific report highlights the medical research activities conducted in 2024 across the Institutes, Departments and laboratories of the Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale (EOC), as well as at the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI). This format reflects the growing collaboration between the two institutions, a partnership strengthened by the establishment of the USI Faculty of Biomedical Sciences and a research cooperation agreement in 2020.

In 2024, the EOC scientific output continued its positive trend from previous years. Both clinical research groups and the laboratories for translational research produced high-quality research that earned broad recognition at national and international level.

Looking ahead, several multidisciplinary research projects are underway, fostering collaborations with research groups worldwide. These collaborative efforts are expected to further fuel the EOC research activities in the coming years.

Alongside patient care and education, research is an essential pillar of the EOC mission. By bringing research closer to clinical practice, the EOC facilitates the development of new clinical and translational studies and enables continuous monitoring of clinical interventions' effectiveness and care processes. This commitment ensures the quality and safety of services delivered to patients and allows patients to easily access and benefit from innovative diagnostic methods and therapies.

The increasing quantity and quality of research activities at EOC are paramount for the USI Faculty of Biomedical Sciences. This growth aligns with the 2022-2025 EOC strategic plan which envisions a cantonal university hospital with mandate for academic education and research.



EOC Institutes and multisites Departments



Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland (IOSI)

Prof. Silke Gillesen Sommer, MD
Medical and Scientific Director
Ilaria Colombo, MD
Chair Clinical Research Unit
Luigi Tortola, PhD
Scientific Project Manager Clinical Research Unit

The Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland (IOSI) is one of the largest clinical cancer research centers in Switzerland with a longstanding experience in the conduct of clinical trials. The IOSI encompasses the clinics in Medical Oncology (Head: Prof. Dr. S. Gillesen), Hematology (Head: Prof. Dr. G. Stüssi), Radiation Oncology (Head: Prof. Dr. T. Zilli) and Palliative Care (Head: PD Dr. T. Fusi-Schmidhauser) and the service of genetics (Head: Dr. S. Maitz). IOSI's expert physicians are also an integral part of the EOC's five interdisciplinary specialized oncology centers (centri oncologici specialistici, or COS) of the EOC, focusing on the treatment of breast, lung, colorectal, prostate and nervous system cancers. Each of the IOSI clinics has its own clinical research activities and each team, based on its scientific interests, can propose trials to be activated or promote investigator-initiated trials. The IOSI scientific research board (composed of the IOSI medical and scientific director, the chair of clinical research, selected senior physicians, the CRU operations and finance managers, the scientific project manager and a finance representative) decides about the trials to be opened and is responsible for the strategy of the clinical research of the institute. To support investigators at IOSI and promote clinical research, a well-structured

clinical research unit (CRU, Head: Dr. I. Colombo) is active and coordinates the research activities. The IOSI-CRU staff includes research nurses, study coordinators, research pharmacists, administrative personnel and a quality assurance manager and provides the infrastructures and support for researchers of the institute. Finally, the dedicated medical team of the Phase I program takes care of the activation and conduct of early phase clinical trials including first-in-human phase I clinical trials, with the goal of offering patients access to innovative, cutting-edge therapies. The IOSI is the only oncology center in Ticino where phase I trials are conducted. The IOSI has an active program of competitive clinical research fellowships, to recruit and train talented young physicians from Switzerland and abroad, some of which then remain to strengthen the medical team dedicated to clinical research. The three main areas of clinical research of our institute comprise new drug development, lymphoproliferative diseases (lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukemia) and prostate cancer, but we have also started to strengthen our clinical research in additional specialties such as lung, gastrointestinal, gynecologic, melanoma and breast cancer. During 2024, 24 new prospective clinical

studies (among them 6 Phase I and 13 Phase II-III interventional clinical trials) were activated, which added to the already active trials, resulted in 52 open prospective studies at the end of 2024, 35 of them being interventional Phase I-III clinical trials. Together with studies evaluating new drugs mainly sponsored by pharmaceutical industry, we also run several investigator-initiated observational studies assessing biomarkers in hematological, prostate, breast and gynecological malignancies in collaboration with the Institute of Oncology Research (IOR), as well as interventional trials in colorectal and prostate cancer. The IOSI is also currently running an initiative to foster the active involvement of patients with cancer in clinical research, educating them to be directly involved in the design and conduct of clinical trials, and in the dissemination of results. Our physicians also carry out numerous retrospective research projects, in which previously collected data is assessed in order to gain insights on the outcomes of different types of malignancies and to identify parameters or treatments that can impact on the disease. During 2024, 8 new retrospective studies were approved, 7 of which were directly initiated by IOSI physicians. Part of these projects serve also as a material for the conduction of master theses for the students of the USI. The IOSI has an excellent history of collaborating with both the pharmaceutical industry and non-for-profit academic organizations. Of particular relevance are the collaborations with the IOR, the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB), the International Extranodal Lymphoma Group (IELSG), the Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research (SAKK), the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) and the Clinical Trial Unit of the EOC (CTU-EOC). The participation of the IOSI within the SAKK is particularly strong, with several of our physicians covering key roles within the various project groups (PG) and working groups (WG). This includes Dr. I. Colombo (Vice President PG Gynecological Cancer), PD Dr. S. De Dosso (Vice President PG Gastrointestinal Cancer), Dr. V. Espeli (President WG Head and Neck Cancer), Dr. R. Graffeo (Vice President Network

for Cancer Predisposition Testing and Counseling), Dr. M. Imbimbo (Vice President PG Developmental Therapeutics), Prof. Dr. F. Bertoni (President PG Lymphoma) and Prof. Dr. A. Stathis (President PG Developmental Therapeutics). Furthermore, in 2024, PD Dr. U. Vogl newly assumed the presidency of the PG Urogenital Tumors. Furthermore, Prof. Dr. T. Zilli and Prof. Dr. D. Rossi are members of the Scientific Committee of SAKK. Many of our medical staff have a central role in the USI Faculty of Biomedical Sciences and are also associated with ETH Zurich, University of Berne, University of Geneva, University of Zurich, University of Padua and the STAMPEDE team in the UK. Over the past year, new collaborations have been established with the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), with competitively funded applied research projects focusing on nursing research, on the evaluation of new devices and on the integration of artificial intelligence into clinical practice. The quality of the clinical research carried out at the IOSI is periodically verified through audits and inspections from the authorities. In 2024, two audits (one internal and one from an external sponsor) and one inspection (from Swissmedic) were conducted and successfully passed. The high volume of clinical research activity highlights the devotion of IOSI to clinical research, with an extensive publication record of IOSI researchers in a multitude of areas related to both solid tumors and hematological malignancies that was maintained also in 2024. Researchers from the IOSI regularly present results of their work or are invited as speakers or chairpersons in major international conferences. This includes the Annual Congress of the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO), with Prof. Dr. S. Gillesen, PD Dr. S. De Dosso, PD Dr. U. Vogl, Dr. I. Colombo and Prof. Dr. A. Stathis serving as speakers and chairpersons in different sessions. Prof. Gillesen in particular had the honor of presenting the first results of the EORTC-GUCG/PEACE-3 clinical trial during the Presidential Symposium of this congress. In the field of hematology, Prof. Dr. D. Rossi serves in the Organizing Committee of the International

Conference of Malignant Lymphomas, in the Board of the international Workshop of Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia and in the Scientific Committee member of the European School of Hematology. The IOSI organizes a variety of educational events to keep its staff updated on the latest developments in cancer research. Regular initiatives include the monthly “IOSI Oncobrunch” and “IOSI Educational Conferences”. Additionally, in 2024, the IOSI organized several notable events, such as the “GU Cancer Forum 2024” (in collaboration with the SAKK), the “Drug Development in Oncology 2024” conference (in collaboration with the Institut Curie) and the “Workshop in Cancer Genetics”. The past year also saw significant achievements and recognitions for IOSI-affiliated professionals. Prof. Dr. S. Gillesen was appointed President of the Scientific Council of the Swiss foundation “Fond’Action contre le cancer”. Prof. Dr. F. Cavalli, the former Director and Founder of the IOSI, was honored with the prestigious "Award for Lifetime Achievement" by the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) in recognition of his groundbreaking contributions to oncology. Dr. M. Cefali received the “SAKK/Gilead Expanding Horizons in Oncology Award” for his innovative initiative to train healthcare professionals in oncology and hematology on the importance of patient involvement in research. The EOC’s Specialized Oncology Center (COS) for colorectal cancer earned international quality certification from the European institute OnkoZert, affirming its commitment to excellence in patient care. Dr. M.C. Piroso and Dr. M. Imbimbo received Best Poster Awards at the International Symposium on Hodgkin Lymphoma and at the European Lung Cancer Congress, respectively. The IOSI Nursing Team also distinguished itself by earning the top prize from the Swiss Oncology Nursing Society for their practice project, “Simulating is Learning”. Finally, PD Dr. R. Pereira Mestre was awarded the title of Privatdozent by USI. Finally, several grants were obtained by IOSI investigators, in particular Prof. Dr. S. Gillesen from the Helmut Horten Foundation for the MIMIC-PRO / PROMIZE study, from the foundation “Fond’Action

Contre le Cancer” for the ASpiRE trial (both grants in collaboration with Prof. A. Alimonti from the IOR) and from the Swiss Cancer League for a health economic analysis of the trial SAKK 96/12 (in collaboration with Prof. Schwenkglenks from the University of Basel), Prof. Dr. T. Zilli from the Swiss Cancer League and from the Rising Tide Foundation for the STAMPEDE 2 trial, and Prof. Dr. D. Rossi from “Fond’Action Contre le Cancer” and from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) for projects on B cell and Hodgkin lymphoma, respectively. The IOSI Nursing team also obtained a grant (in collaboration with researchers from SUPSI) for a study regarding the implementation of the Advanced Practice Nurse in oncology palliative care from the Swiss Cancer League. A total of 5 EOC awards were assigned to IOSI researchers in 2024, including four young investigator awards (Dr. M. Imbimbo, Dr. M. C. Piroso; Dr. M. Pedrani and Dr. I. Romano) and one senior award (Prof. Dr. D. Rossi). For the years to come, the development of investigator-initiated trials represents a major objective of clinical research for the IOSI. For this reason, the IOSI is aiming to increase the number of investigator-initiated clinical trials over the next years in collaboration also with the CTU-EOC. With the aim of further promoting the transfer of preclinical knowledge to the clinic, regular scientific meetings with the heads and PIs of IOR and the IRB (now Bios+) have continued in 2024. This resulted in the publication of several collaborative original research articles involving IOSI as well as IRB / IOR.

Institute of Clinical Neurosciences of Southern Switzerland – Neurocenter (INSI)

Prof. Alain Kaelin, MD PhD
Medical and Scientific Director

The mission of the INSI is offering the highest quality of cure to the patient with the application and promotion of an inter- and multidisciplinary approach. Translational and clinical research as well as educational activities are a priority of the INSI with a close interaction between research activities and patient care. Academic collaboration with the USI, SUPSI as well as other national and international universities are contributing to the success of the INSI. Also in 2024 there was an intense and successful clinical and translational research activity, with a large number of scientific articles published in high-ranked journals and numerous competitive grants obtained.

Epilepsy research group
Dr. P. Agazzi, Dr. C. Prosperetti

During 2024 we concluded the recruitment and follow-up of the Swiss First Study, a multicentre research consortium in patients with a first epileptic seizure. We implemented the registry, started in 2020, of primary brain tumours patients aiming to characterize sex differences in prevalence, biochemical markers, treatment and outcome. The first statistical analysis are ongoing. In collaboration with the Cardiological Intensive Care Unit we are studying new detection methods to measure biomarkers of brain damage after cardiac arrest in order to make them available for clinical purposes. Studio CE 3603-BASEC 2020-00503 (NONCO-GEN-20) “Differenze di genere e tumori cerebrali primitivi gliali: descrizione di una casistica”.

Headache research group
Prof. Dr. C. Zecca

The research focuses on genetic and clinical predictors of efficacy of new migraine treatments, and exploring their safety profile in the post-marketing setting. Epidemiology and pathophysiology of migraine and effectiveness of patient’s education on migraine via AI based platform are also investigated. Our Center also participates in various industry sponsored studies in patients with migraine.

Movement Disorders research group
PD Dr. S. Galati

The priority of our clinical research is to investigate the influence of neuronal plasticity changes during sleep on movement disorders such as dystonia and levodopa-induced dyskinesia (LID) in Parkinson's Disease (PD). Three translational research projects are ongoing in patients with PD affected by LID using high-density recordings and acoustic stimulation. In the first two studies, we aim to investigate the synaptic “build-up” process happening during wake, as reflected by the increase of theta activity throughout the day, to understand better if the lack of a clear cut in slow wave activity (SWA) content throughout the night, characterizing LID patients, is related to an abnormal build-up process or if it is attributable to an impaired SWA mediated downscaling process per se. In the second study, we aim to assess the

clinical effect of acoustic stimulation during the night compared to sham stimulation on LID. We will evaluate the severity of LID as detected by objective and subjective measures; we expect a reduction of LID in PD patients when receiving acoustic stimulation. In collaboration with the Swiss Red Cross, the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana, and the Hildebrand Clinic, we carried out a further study to investigate the effects of a group music creation program on the health and well-being of Parkinson's patients.

Multiple Sclerosis Center

Prof. Dr. C. Gobbi, Prof. Dr. C. Zecca

The research focuses on diagnosis and treatment, exploring new MRI techniques, understanding better risks associated with new multiple sclerosis (MS) therapies in aged MS patients and their mitigation, searching for innovative neuromodulation treatments of overactive bladder. We also participate in a nationwide investigator initiated project on MS epidemiology. The Center is also a recognized study site for several industry sponsored international clinical trials.

Neurodegenerative Diseases research group

Prof. Dr. G. Melli

Our research focuses on the detection and characterization of peripheral biomarkers for Parkinson's Disease (PD) and other neurodegenerative diseases like atypical parkinsonisms. We demonstrated that PD patients present a somatosensory small fiber neuropathy that correlates with disease duration and progression and we identified α -Syn pathogenic species in the skin biopsy. These projects take advantage of a biobank and clinical database for PD and atypical parkinsonisms that we established at INSI in Lugano since 2015. In 2024, we published a paper on novel data on increased tau seeding activity assay by RT-QuIC, an innovative ultrasensitive technology, in skin biopsy of patients with primary tauopathies. We are investigating how peripheral inflammation and immune dysregulation can contribute to brain neuronal cell death in PD using neuronal and microglia cell cultures

and the generation of human iPS-derived midbrain organoids. (see also chapter III on the Laboratories for Translational Research).

Peripheral Nerves research group and Center Myosuisse

Prof. Dr. G. Melli, PD Dr. P. Ripellino

The center takes advantage of the “skin biopsy laboratory” for the diagnosis of small fiber neuropathy and the “clinical autonomic nervous system laboratory” for the evaluation of dysautonomic disorders. We are working on several research projects for early detection and characterization of amyloid fibrils in skin biopsy of patients with transthyretin and light chain amyloidosis by electron microscopy and proteomic approaches in collaboration with IRB, Bellinzona and the cryo-EM unit, University of Geneva. In 2024 we published in Nature (see publication list) the first identification in human of autoreactive T cells targeting peripheral nerves in Guillain-Barré syndrome. This paper shed new light in disease pathogenesis, suggesting that the axonal (AMAN) and the demyelinating form (AIDP) of the disease may have different immunological background; this concept opens new therapeutic perspectives. We published several other articles based on registry data, thanks to the collaboration with international networks on Guillain-Barré syndrome (IGOS), CIDP (INCBASE and the cohort of patients with COn tactin-1 antibodies) and genetic neuropathies (mainly SORD). We further concluded a national study coordinated by Lugano on preceding infections in Neuralgic Amyotrophy. Furthermore, we actively participated in the Swiss Register of neuromuscular diseases, and started both the registry on Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and the Biobank on neuromuscular diseases (Biobanca Myosuisse).

Neuropsychology and Speech Therapy research group

PD Dr. L. Sacco

The neuropsychology research unit is engaged in a wide range of projects aimed

at understanding the mechanisms of social cognition in various clinical conditions. These include both neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Frontotemporal dementia, and neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. The projects are conducted at both national and international levels, collaborating with prestigious research institutes and universities. In addition to theoretical research, the unit is actively involved in international clinical trials, with a specific focus on innovative therapies and early interventions for Alzheimer's disease. Moreover, we are actively investigating neuropsychological and plasma biomarkers to facilitate diagnostic and therapeutic processes for these patients. This commitment allows the integration of scientific research with practical applications, aiming to enhance patients' quality of life while fostering a deeper understanding of neuropsychological diseases and their treatments.

Neuroradiology research group

Prof. Dr. A. Cianfoni

The Neuroradiology Service of the INSI is committed to providing high-level morphological and functional advanced diagnostic neuroimaging, image-guided spine interventions, as well as endovascular diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. On the magnetic resonance imaging research side there is continuous effort and work in progress on funded and multicentric reasearch projects on the high-resolution 3D MRI study of anterior optic pathway by AI-assisted anterior visual pathway image segmentation. -In keeping with the research line conducted at INSI about high resolution MRI of the Optic Nerve, there has been involvement in an international, multicentric prospective investigation A new project using a novel, ultra-high contrast MRI technique, called MASDIR, is in progress, in collaboration with the University of California San Diego, applied to patients with MS and migraine. There has been continuous clinical research collaboration with the MS Neurology center. In the Head and Neck domain there

is ongoing clinical reasearch effort, in collaboration with Otorynolaryngology service, on perfusion MRI study of salivary glands tumors, flat panel CT imaging of middle and inner ear, and MRI imaging of endolymphatic hydrops. INSI Neuroradiology collaborates in reasearch projects with IIMSI Radiology on MR examinations under hypnosis, for claustrophobic patients, with Cardiology with the multicentric SWISS-AF REACT-HF studies, with pediatric neurology with study PASTA, on pediatric stroke, with Neuro-oncology with the SAKK study, on RANO imaging criteria for Glioblastoma, with The Neurology Dept. With the IMPOSE study on status epilepticus. On the interventional side, there has been continuous effort on ongoing studies mainly on the minimally invasive treatment of osteoporotic and neoplastic vertebral fractures, in close collaboration with the INSI Neurosurgery department and the INSI pain medicine service. The follow-up of a feasibility phase for a randomized controlled trial comparing a minimally invasive interventional technique, called SAIF, to the standard surgical stabilization for unstable vertebral fractures has been completed. Interventional Neuroradiology participates in two multicenter randomized controlled trials on endovascular stroke treatment, respectively called DISTAL, which has been completed, and TEKNO, which is ongoing. There has been a continuous output of scientific publication on minimally invasive approaches to treat complex osteoporotic vertebral fractures. A multicentric retrospective study has been completed on a minimally invasive sclerotization of aggressive vertebral hemangiomas.

Neurosurgery research group

PD Dr. A. Cardia, Dr. F. Marchi

The neurosurgery research group is active both in the field of the cranial (oncological and vascular), and the spinal diseases. The Brain Tumour Research Project in collaboration with the Cantonal Institute of Pathology focused on the role of miRNA in Glioma treatment, the opportunity of liquid biopsies in cerebral neoplasms and the impact of MGMT quantification profile

in the outcome of oncological patients. A research project on the intraoperative quantification of fluorescence in brain tumor and the creation of a prototype microscope for the intraoperative use is ongoing in collaboration with SUPSI. The vascular research group participates to the national study on subarachnoid hemorrhages for intracranial aneurysms (SWISS SOS) and the national trial on intracerebral hemorrhages (EMINENT CH). The Spinal Research Group is focused on the innovative field of Robotic technologies, new imagining systems and augmented reality in complex spinal surgery, with a particular interest in the geriatric population. In collaboration with the Neuroradiology Department, the group promoted the development of innovative combined minimally invasive surgical techniques for the treatment of traumatic, oncological and osteoporotic fractures.

Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation (NIBS) research group

PD Dr. G.C. Riccitelli

The NIBS Research Unit is at the forefront of pioneering integrated neuromodulation treatments aimed at alleviating motor, perceptual, and cognitive impairments resulting from traumatic brain injuries. Since 2023, the unit has expanded its focus to include innovative home-based neurorehabilitation treatments delivered through online platforms. These cutting-edge, personalised interventions are designed to ensure continuous accessibility to patient treatment, overcoming physical and logistical barriers. Strategic partnerships with leading academic and research institutions have significantly bolstered the unit's research efforts. These collaborations have resulted in dynamic advancements in research, particularly in developing national clinical protocols and pioneering novel treatment methodologies. Notably, NIBS plays a crucial role in two high-profile Innosuisse Flagship projects that focus on creating clinical protocols for studying neurocognitive disorders in stroke victims. Furthermore, the unit is actively engaged in a European Training Network dedicated to validating and refining a ground breaking neuromodulation

technique to reduce severe pain in cancer patients, underscoring their commitment to advancing medical science and patient care.

Ophthalmology research group

PD Dr. M. Menghini, Dr. G. Grimaldi

Our ophthalmology research group continues to investigate the clinical impact of novel treatment modalities for retinal macular diseases. The focus is now on gathering 2-year data on faricimab use in our centre, as well as 1-year data on the use of aflibercept 8 mg in 2 main cohorts of patients (neovascular age-related macular degeneration and diabetic macular edema). Following the authorization of intravitreal faricimab for a novel indication (i.e. patients with macular edema secondary to retinal vein occlusion), we are also collecting data on this cohort of patients. One ongoing project investigates the potential intraocular pressure (IOP) elevation associated with the higher-dose aflibercept 8mg formulation, including the potential impact of drug delivery through pre-filled syringes. Furthermore, the group is investigating the occurrence of any neuroretinal damage by monitoring changes in structural parameters (eg optical coherence tomography) in the above-mentioned cohorts of patients treated with aflibercept 8 mg. 2024 has been a year of significant growth in national collaborations, marked by the signing of important agreements with other Swiss institutes. In particular, our group contributed to the creation of the Swiss Retina Research Network, a national consortium of specialized retina centers aiming to collect real-world data on novel therapies for macular diseases. Our center is one of the top enrollers providing data for all projects currently being conducted by the network, spanning from faricimab use in patients with neovascular age-related macular degeneration (nAMD), diabetic macular edema and vein occlusion to preliminary real-world evidence on the use of aflibercept 8mg in nAMD and DME. Similarly, we are part of a multicentre project involving the use of artificial intelligence for evaluation of retinal imaging (RetinAI). We are currently collecting data for 2 main studies, focusing on central serous

chorioretinopathy and on age-related macular degeneration. Our group continues to be actively involved in research evaluating the outcomes of various surgical procedures. One ongoing study investigates the impact of vitrectomy surgery on visual function in patients with retinal detachment. This research utilizes advanced imaging techniques such as OCT and microperimetry to assess the relationship between surgical outcomes and functional recovery. Another ongoing project analyzes visual function, metamorphopsia, and anatomical outcomes in patients undergoing vitrectomy with macular peeling for epiretinal membranes. This research aims to better understand the factors that influence visual outcomes after this surgical intervention. Additionally, the group is evaluating the long-term visual outcomes, complication rates, and indications for Artisan IOL implantation in patients with inadequate capsular support. Our group is also actively engaged in research in the field of neuro-ophthalmology, collaborating with colleagues from the Neurocenter (neurology, neuroradiology). In particular, we are collecting structural retinal data on patients with migraine to assess if there is any retinal or choroidal involvement in this subgroup of patients. Another project involves the potential correlation between optic nerve optical coherence tomography and novel dedicated magnetic resonance imaging sequences. Funding of the ophthalmology research group is through an unrestricted research grant by BAYER AG Switzerland. In addition, our research unit serves as study site for two Phase IV clinical trials.

Pain research group

PD Dr. E. Koetsier, PD Dr. P. Maino

The Pain Management Center is at the forefront of cutting-edge international research, conducting multicenter randomized controlled trials, observational studies, and systematic reviews with meta-analyses. These studies are strategically designed to enhance the effectiveness of chronic pain treatments, with a strong emphasis on minimally invasive interventions. Furthermore, we explore the

intricate interplay between psychological factors and treatment outcomes in pain management. Given that low back pain and neck pain are among the leading causes of disability worldwide, the Center for Pain Therapy is dedicated to developing innovative minimally invasive treatments. Our research focuses specifically on chronic low back and neck pain that is resistant to conventional therapies. We prioritize pioneering approaches such as cervical and lumbar facet joint radiofrequency denervation and intradiscal injections with hyaluronic acid, hydrogels, and ozone. In addition, we actively evaluate and refine the efficacy of dorsal root ganglion stimulation and spinal cord stimulation for the treatment of back pain and painful polyneuropathy. Our comprehensive approach also includes investigating the impact of psychological factors, such as pain catastrophizing, and optimizing treatment strategies to better align with patient expectations. Collaboration is at the heart of our research efforts. The NSI Pain Management Center engages in multidisciplinary projects with experts from neurosurgery, neuroradiology, orthopedics, and neurology. We also maintain strong academic partnerships, including close collaboration with Maastricht University—working alongside Prof. S. van Kuijk—and with Prof. M. Barbero from SUPSI.

Sleep research group

Prof. Dr. M. Manconi; Prof. Dr. S. Miano

The research mission of the Sleep Medicine is to explore brain function and maturation during sleep and sleep-related disorders mainly by using innovative electrophysiological approaches, such as High-Density EEG. The main field of interest of our research are sleep related movement disorders such as restless legs syndrome and periodic limb movements, NREM parasomnia and central disorders of hypersomnolence. In 2024 our group produced a significant amount of high-level scientific articles. These results have been obtained thanks to consolidated local and external collaborations. In the past year

3 new projects received a competitive financial support: 1) The SNF related grant Innosuisse has been obtained with the aim to produce a new video recording home device to explore parasomnia in coupling with EEG activity; 2) The Franscini grant has been obtained with the aim of supporting an International Forum on Forensic Sleep Medicine at Momnte Verità center; 3) The American RLS foundation delivered a grant with the aim of evaluate the efficacy of spinal cord stimulation in severe restless legs syndrome. A new drug compound with antiglutamatergic drug is under experiment in restless legs syndrome. Two randomized controlled trials are ongoing to evaluate the efficacy, safety, and tolerability of a new drug for the treatment of Narcolepsy. In 2024 we have been certified as a center for rare diseases in the field of sleep disorders by the Kosek. We have collaborated to Swiss registry of children with home respiratory support, and we are actively involved in the research activity of the Swiss Narcolepsy Network.

Other sleep related fields are also represented, among others, by projects on: sleep and pregnancy, sleep and stroke, sleep and attention deficit hyperactive disorder, and infra-slow oscillation. Two important local collaborations are active, one with the IOSI to evaluate the impact of hormonal treatment on sleep in patients with prostate cancer and in those with brest cancer, and the second on REM behavior disorders in Parkinson Disease. In collaboration with Bern University, the post-doc Master in Sleep and Consciousness successfully progressed from diploma for advanced studies into a master of advanced studies.

Stroke research group

Prof. Dr. C. Cereda, Dr. G. Bianco

The research activities of the Stroke Center focus on patient-oriented clinical research: we are principally interested in understanding the role of multimodal advanced neuroimaging (perfusion imaging) for the diagnosis and selection of best treatment for acute ischemic stroke patients together with the Neuroradiology research group. We are currently leading

studies addressing to the role of multimodal imaging in patients with ischemic stroke in the posterior circulation (basilar artery stroke), in gender differences in acute stroke treatment and stroke related to small vessel disease. We are also especially interested in recognizing new serum biomarkers to optimize the diagnostic process of transient ischemic attack (TIA). We started a specific study in the field (ELVIS ACS Study). The Center also offers a platform for industry promoted international trials and promotes several other clinical studies and participates to numerous national and international projects mainly dedicated to acute stroke management, stroke prevention and stroke treatment.

Cardiocentro Ticino Institute (ICCT)

Prof. Stefanos Demertzis, MD

Scientific Director

Prof. Marco Valgimigli, MD PhD

Chair Clinical Research

Interventional Cardiology

Prof. Dr. M. Valgimigli, PD Dr. D. Sürder, Dr. A. Landi (PhD student), Dr. A. Quagliana, Dr. A. Milzi

The interventional cardiology research group participates in several national and international trials, which are coordinated by the research cardiovascular service (SRC) and runs multiple international interventional studies under the leadership of Prof. Dr. M. Valgimigli as global Principal Investigator (PI). This research groups focuses on advanced statistical and artificial intelligence modelling, new pharmacological options and new coronary and non-coronary devices to optimise the diagnosis and treatment of patients with coronary or structural heart disease. The research leader, Prof. Dr. M. Valgimigli, has an H-index of 113 and has held the title of Clavirate Highly Cited Researcher in Clinical Medicine since 2017, which identifies researchers who rank above the ninety-ninth percentile as the number of citations. Since 2020, he has been on Stanford University's list of ‘World's Top 2%’ scientists’, which identifies the world's most prolific researchers according to a composite index that includes not only the number of citations but also the H-index and many other bibliometric indicators. This group has developed in 2024 the PRECISE HBR bleeding risk scoring system, which is a novel method to predict and possible prevent bleeding risk among patients who underwent coronary artery intervention.

Among the others the group is running the NATURE trial, which investigates the

role of a new thrombectomy device for the management of patients with ST segment elevation myocardial infarction with large thrombus burden and involves 15 sites in Switzerland, Italy and Belgium. This group had designed and currently conducts, in cooperation with the Inselspital, Bern, the MATRIX-2 trial, which investigates a new treatment option for patients who underwent recent coronary stent implantation and are simultaneously affected by atrial fibrillation. This group has designed and conducts several multicenter randomised clinical trials, including TITAN-DEB Furthermore, the group is actively participating as recruitment site in multiple randomised trials and registries, among which SWISS TAVI, MITRASWISS, SOS AMI, PROTECT 4, Amundsen, Victorion Plaque, and Ex-VIVO, LIBREXIA-ACS and many others. This research group has published this year, among the others, a seminal individual patient data meta-analysis (SIDNEY-4) which was published in the Lancet and showed that an innovative treatment modality, consisting of ticagrelor monotherapy after a short course of dual anti-platelet therapy is associated with lower bleeding and lower mortality risks compared with standard of care. In 2024, this group hosted two full time fellows.

Clinical Eletrophysiology

Prof. Dr. G. Conte

The Cardiac Electrophysiology and Pacing research group focuses on the diagnosis and management of heart rhythm disorders,

including atrial fibrillation, cardiac implantable devices, lead and device management, remote patient monitoring, computer modeling, and AI-enabled advanced signal processing. The group is also actively involved in the field of rare cardiovascular diseases, such as genetic cardiomyopathies and cardiac channelopathies. The group contributes to several national and international trials focused on cardiac implantable devices, ablation of atrial and ventricular arrhythmias, and genetic diseases. In 2024, the group has led significant registries related to the management of atrial arrhythmias and heart failure, genetic arrhythmia syndromes, cardiac arrest resuscitation, and cardiac implantable device infections. These projects have resulted in publications in prestigious journals, including the European Heart Journal, Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC), Heart Rhythm, JACC EP, EP Europace, and Resuscitation. Additionally, the group plays an active role in the scientific and educational activities of the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA), contributing to key committees (Education, Scientific Initiatives, and Cardiogenetics). The group collaborates with Fondazione Ticino Cuore, the InterDisciplinary Institute of Data Science at USI and the Institute of Digital Technologies for Personalized Healthcare (MeDiTech) at SUPSI. These collaborations allowed to create an AI-based model to enhance the diagnosis of life-threatening heart conditions based on the 12-lead ECG and to obtain funding from the Swiss Heart Foundation, Innosuisse-Eurostars 2 and the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Cardiac Surgery

Prof. Dr. S. Demertzis, Prof. Dr. E. Ferrari

Extracorporeal Circulation

1) Intraoperative monitoring of the gaseous emboli (micro-air bubbles) that travel through the heart-lung machine and are filtered by the several machine components was introduced. Despite filtering, in some cases clouds of tiny bubbles (generally <200µm) still enter the patient and we are assessing their correlation with systemic inflammatory reactions or subtle neurological effects (S. Demertzis, S. Vandenberghe, M. Puthettu). Funded by the

Swiss Heart Foundation -concluded-.
2) Protecting the brain while treating the heart is a block of two projects focusing on quantification of air-bubbles captured in the heart chambers during open-heart surgery. One of the subprojects (AIRCATCH) is funded by the Fondo EOC-USI (Fondazione Daccò) and the other is funded by the Foundation Fidinam (S. Demertzis, S. Vandenberghe, R. Krause – USI).
3) Analysis of venous drainage in extracorporeal circulation using different types of venous cannulas (E. Ferrari in collaboration with the University of Lausanne).

Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting surgery

The European Registry of Clinical Outcomes after external support of saphenous vein grafts (VEST) after coronary artery bypass grafting coordinated by S. Demertzis (PI) in 8 European centers concluded patient enrollment and is registering the foreseen follow-up interviews up to 5 years after surgery with prospected conclusion in 2026.

Cardiac Valves

1) Analysis of hemodynamic and flow performances of virtual wall-less cannula in minimally invasive cardiac surgery (E. Ferrari).
2) Predictability of failure of surgical mitral valve repair analyzing preoperative imaging using machine learning. Initialization of a common project in collaboration with the USI (Prof. Krause - Euler Institute) (T. Torre, S. Demertzis).
3) Analysis of clinical data and outcome after implantation of transcatheter aortic valves (TAVI) in general for severe aortic stenosis (focusing on alternative access than the femoral artery) and in presence of concomitant significant tricuspid valve regurgitation (E. Ferrari).
4) Bench tests and feasibility study of transcatheter aortic root replacement with different configurations of the devices (E. Ferrari).
5) Analysis of long-term outcomes under different anticoagulation / antiaggregation regimes after TAVI registered in the SWISS TAVI registry (E. Ferrari in collaboration with the University of Bern). 6) Analysis of the radiologically documented position of TAVI-in-TAVI implantations and the corresponding clinical outcomes (E. Ferrari, multicenter study).

Thoracic Aorta

1) Retrospective analysis of aortic size indices and the contribution of aortic length to the risk stratification in patients with acute aortic dissection type A (S. Grego, S. Demertzis).
2) Analysis of surgical results and clinical mid-term follow-up of patients treated with aortic root replacement or aortic root repair (E. Ferrari).

Cardio-anesthesiology and intensive care

Prof. Dr. T. Cassina

1) A prospective clinical study focusing on the kinetics of Neurofilament Light Chain after cardiac arrest as prognostic parameter of neurological damage is ongoing (in collaboration with INSI). on traumatic injuries after manual and mechanical cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
2) We participate on a randomized controlled trial (STEP CARE trial) on sedation, temperature and pressure after cardiac arrest and resuscitation. PD Dr. G. Via is member of the panel of the Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) Task Force on the Ultrasound Guideline Focused Update and member of the panel of the American Society of Echocardiography (ASE) writing group on Nomenclature Standards for Cardiac Point-of-Care Ultrasound Imaging.
3) An ambitious project supported by the Foundation Adiuvaré is the realisation of an individualized computerized simulation of the vascular system of a patient aimed to optimize the choice of peripheral vascular access sites and simulate the navigation of catheters and devices through the arteries, which are reconstructed based on the diagnostic images of the patient.
4)Hypno-VR is an interprofessional research project aiming to assess the calming effect of selected virtual reality (VR) videos projected through a VR-headset during surgical procedures performed under local anaesthesia and light sedation.

Cardiac Imaging

Dr. L.A. Leo, PD Dr. A.G. Pavon, Dr. S. Schlossbauer, Dr. A. Caretta, Dr. G. Viani

The Cardiovascular Imaging Research Group is dedicated to using multimodality imaging for

the diagnosis and management of ischemic heart disease and valvular heart disease, as well as the development of artificial intelligence models aimed at optimizing risk stratification in non-ischemic cardiomyopathies. Under the leadership of PD Dr. Pavon and in collaboration with the Interventional Cardiology Unit, the team has designed and is currently conducting the TITAN-MRI study, which investigates the role of Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance (CMR) in patients with non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction. This project is a multicentric interventional trial supported by a SNSF grant. Another key research focus is the optimization of arrhythmic risk stratification in both ischemic and non-ischemic heart disease. This project explores the role of novel CMR techniques with funding from the Swiss Heart Foundation. The group is also actively involved in studies of valvular heart disease and arrhythmic disorders, particularly evaluating the role of imaging deformation parameters as potential markers for pacemaker implantation during TAVI follow-up or risk stratification. In addition, reproducibility in assessing aortic regurgitation by echocardiographic analyses in long-term follow-up is being explored. Furthermore, the team provides expert imaging support for all clinical trials and research projects coordinated by the ICCT Cardiovascular Research Service, serving as the core laboratory for the NATURE trial, which involves the analysis of transthoracic echocardiography and CMR data from 15 national and international centers. In terms of educational activities, the team is currently supervising four Master's theses in medicine at the Università della Svizzera italiana, while Dr. Leo organizes 3D echocardiography courses at the ICCT and at major international cardiology congresses. Finally, in 2024, the group hosted three Cardiovascular Imaging Fellows, all of whom successfully obtained European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging (EACVI) certifications in advanced multimodality imaging techniques, including transthoracic and transesophageal echocardiography as well as CMR. Additionally, the group plays an active role in the scientific and educational activities of the European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging (EACVI) and the Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance, contributing to key committees (Education, Scientific Initiatives, Certification).

Lugano cell factory (LCF)

Dr. L. Turchetto

LCF is a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) facility authorized by Swissmedic for the production of Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMP)/transplant products. 1) The LCF became the first clinical manufacturing site of microtissues for knee cartilage regeneration producing hyaline cartilage beads (Cartibeads) from human chondrocytes (in cooperation with Vanarix SA). The first patient has already been successfully implanted in 2022 upon Swissmedic's approval of the first Cartibeads-based Swiss trial.

2) LCF has also established a collaboration with the University of Manchester (UK) to act as a GMP manufacturing center for a gene and cell-based therapy product related to the treatment of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. LCF performed process validations and also contributed to preparing the regulatory dossier recently submitted to the regulatory authorities for approval of phase 1 clinical trial.

3) The LCF developed a novel protocol for the production of clinical-grade human exosomes derived from cardiac progenitor cells [patent application N° 102017000035315_ (IT/CH/PCT) entitled “Device and method for exosomes production and purification”]. In this context, LCF is presently participating to a European consortium (MARVEL project/ H2020 grant) devoted to improve the purity of the GMP grade exosomes for diagnostic and/ or clinical applications.

4)The LCF operates as qualified and approved cardiovascular tissue bank (aortic and pulmonary valves, as well as pericardium for human use) having delivered and continuing to provide certified cardiovascular tissues for patient treatment.

Laboratory research

[See chapter III on the Laboratories for Translational Research.](#)

Imaging Institute of Southern Switzerland (IIMSI)

Prof. Filippo Del Grande, MD
Medical and Scientific Director

The Imaging Institute of Southern Switzerland (IIMSI) includes the Clinic of Radiology (Head: Prof. Dr. F. Del Grande), the Clinic of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (Head: PD Dr. G. Paone) and the Medical Physics Service (Head: Dr. S. Presilla).

Clinic of Radiology

The Clinic of Radiology of the Imaging Institute of Southern Switzerland (IIMSI) offers diagnostic and interventional imaging examinations in the main four sites of the Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale (Bellinzona, Locarno, Lugano, Mendrisio). The Clinic of Radiology offers a complete coverage of the body imaging, with radiologists divided into subspecialties (musculo-skeletal imaging, oncologic imaging, urogenital imaging, women's imaging, thoracic imaging, abdominal imaging, pediatric imaging, interventional radiology), to enhance specific skills and competence, in order to offer the patients and their referring physicians a highly specialized radiological service. The research topics within the clinic of radiology has been recently structured to better reflect its innovative organization, based on a grid of transversal and longitudinal topics. Transversal research topics are based on innovative technology, body composition and evidence based medicine. Longitudinal research topics pertain to the single abovementioned subspecialties. Among the subspecialties, the below mentioned are the most active in research, as reflected by their scientific production in terms of publications as well as of projects granted by external funding.

Musculoskeletal imaging

Lead Prof. Dr. F. Del Grande

The radiologists dedicated to musculoskeletal imaging, are conducting research projects, with the objective of improving image quality without prolonging the time of acquisition, with the help of artificial intelligence mediated approaches. Furthermore, the advanced technology of the Institute allows to test and use new technologies, developments and sequences aiming to a better understanding of different features of muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves, such as (but not limited to) diffusion tensor imaging and Dixon sequences.

Oncologic imaging

Lead Prof. Dr. S. Rizzo

The radiologists dedicated to oncologic imaging are conducting several research projects with the aim of understanding how quantitative imaging of body composition is associated with clinically relevant outcomes in cancer patients. With this end, different approaches are under evaluation and are the core of many ongoing research projects, one of which funded by the Swiss Cancer League and dedicated to the effects on body composition of specific treatments in prostate cancer patients. The group dedicated to oncologic imaging is also involved in national and international collaborations evaluating artificial intelligence mediated approaches (including machine learning and convolutional neural networks) for prognostication in different cancer settings, and technical improvements to reduce the radiation dose in CT scans, without affecting image quality.

Furthermore, the group leader is involved by international societies, such as ESUR and EORTC, in updating international guidelines related to gynecological imaging.

Uro-genital Imaging

Lead Prof. Dr. R. Wyttenbach

The radiologists dedicated to the urogenital diseases are involved in a multicentric project aiming to find an artificial intelligence based way to detect prostate cancer with magnetic resonance imaging.

Breast imaging

Lead PD Dr. S. Schiaffino

The radiologists of the breast imaging team are involved in the research projects of the CSSI (Centro di Senologia della Svizzera Italiana) as well as in international multicenter studies. Part of the team is developing systematic reviews and meta-analyses in the high-risk breast lesions field and is leading or co-leading research studies related to the use of large language models in breast imaging.

Interventional radiology

Lead Dr. M.A. Ruffino

The interventional radiologists are conducting monocentric as well as multicentric research projects, with the objective of improving the standard of care for patients undergoing percutaneous vascular and non-vascular procedures for vascular and oncologic diseases. Furthermore, the advanced technology of the Institute allows testing and using new tools and techniques to treat complex pathologies as aortic dissections and thoraco-abdominal aneurysms.

Clinic of Nuclear Medicine

PET radiomics and predictive imaging of lymphomas

Prof. Dr. L. Ceriani

- Development and validation of new PET metrics, radiomic analysis and artificial Intelligence tools. Collaborations:

IELSG, SAKK, IOR, IOSI, Amsterdam University Medical Centre, Federazione Italiana Linfomi, United Kingdom Cancer Research Institute.

- Integration of PET/CT data, biological and genomic features (i.e. liquid biopsy) using Radiomics, Genomics and Artificial Intelligence tools to model new diagnostic/ prognostic approaches. Collaborations: IELSG, SAKK, IOR, IOSI, Amsterdam University Medical Centre, Federazione Italiana Linfomi, United Kingdom Cancer Research Institute.

Theragnostics

PD Dr. G. Paone

- Research activities in theragnostic field for the Therapy working group of the Swiss Society of Nuclear Medicine (SGNM) particularly focused on prostate cancer and neuroendocrine tumors. Collaborations with Universitatsspital Bern, Novartis/AAA.
- Personalized dosimetry studies focused on selective internal radiotherapy with Y-90. Collaborations with Istituto Nazionale Tumori Milan, Boston Scientific and Mirada group.

Evidence-based nuclear medicine

Prof. Dr. G. Treglia

- Production of evidence-based documents (systematic reviews and meta-analyses) and guidelines on nuclear medicine. Collaborations: European Association of Nuclear Medicine, EORTC, University of Lausanne, University of Brescia, University of Mashhad, Fondazione Policlinico A. Gemelli Rome, Candiolo Cancer Institute, Ospedali Galliera Genoa.
- Research activities for the PET working group of the Swiss Society of Nuclear Medicine focused on the achievement of reimbursement for new PET indications.

Institute of Pediatrics of Southern Switzerland (IPSI)

Prof. Giacomo Simonetti, MD

Medical and Scientific Director

The Istituto Pediatrico della Svizzera Italiana (IPSI), headquartered in Bellinzona, offers a highly specialized level of care for neonates, infants, children, and adolescents. Its departments of basic and specialty pediatrics, surgical and orthopedic clinic, and pediatric anesthesia, are driven by the common desire to improve the health and well-being of these patients and their families.

IPSI also has a dedicated pediatric research unit led by Prof. Dr. G. Simonetti (head of the research unit) and coordinated by PD Dr. med F. Vanoni and PD Dr. med B. Goeggel Simonetti (co-responsibles of the research unit) and composed of several research physicians and one study coordinator. IPSI's research unit is included in SwissPedNet, a Swiss based network that promotes pediatric clinical research in Switzerland and collaborates with other Swiss University centers, also participating in several national and international studies and registries. IPSI covers the following pediatric research areas: cardiology and nephrology, general pediatrics, infectious diseases, neuropediatrics, onco-hematology, rheumatology and pediatric surgery. The principal areas of research for each subspecialty are:

Cardiology-Nephrology

Dr. C. Leoni-Foglia, Dr. A. Stefani-Glücksberg, Prof. Dr. M. G. Bianchetti and Prof. Dr. G. Simonetti

In 2024 IPSI collaborated in the HyperChildNet board, a COST Action of the EU with the aim at improving awareness of childhood hypertension, and participated in a study

on fluid homeostasis during anesthesia, measured by bio-impedance technic. IPSI also currently participates in three pediatric cardiology registries (Pediatric Brugada Registry, Swiss Pediatric Heart Cohort (SPHC), and International Calmodulin registry) and collaborates in one pediatric nephrology registry (Swiss Pediatric Renal Registry).

General Pediatrics

Prof. Dr. M. G. Bianchetti, Prof. Dr. G. D. Simonetti, PD Dr. F. Vanoni

In 2024, IPSI participated in a national survey study regarding pediatric nutrition (MENUkids) with the aim of providing valuable information on the nutritional status of Swiss children. Currently, in collaboration with USI Lugano, it is participating in a study on fever phobia among parents of children. In addition, several systematic reviews have been published. Topics of such systematic reviews are mainly pediatric rare diseases and pediatric rare complications, such as Lemierre syndrome and its association with Epstein-Barr virus; Hoigné's syndrome; drug-related pyroglutamic acidosis; acute aseptic meningitis temporally associated with intravenous polyclonal immunoglobulin therapy; and more.

Infectious disease

PD Dr. L. Kottanattu

We are currently involved in a randomized controlled non-inferiority trial of placebo

versus macrolide antibiotics in children with community acquired pneumonia (CAP) infected with Mycoplasma Pneumoniae. The aim of this study is to demonstrate the non-inferiority of macrolides versus placebo, with the general objective of decreasing the resistance of Mycoplasma Pneumoniae to macrolides.

In 2024, we participated in the ADEQUATE study, a multi-centric industry randomized-controlled trial, about advanced diagnostics for enhanced quality of antibiotic prescription in respiratory tract infections in emergency rooms. Objective of the study were to assess the impact of rapid diagnostic testing of patients with Acute Respiratory Tract Infection (ARTI) at the emergency department, on hospital admission rates and antibiotic prescriptions (days of treatment).

We also currently participate in 3 pediatric infectious disease registries: Diagnosis of Tuberculosis in Swiss Children (CITRUS), RSV EpiCH (registry on Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) case numbers to understand the seasonability and impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic) and the Swiss Study of HIV mother and Child Cohort (MoCHiv).

Neurology

PD Dr. B. Goeggel Simonetti, Prof. Dr. G.P. Ramelli

In 2024 IPSI participated in a project on early diagnosis of autism (Auto-Play-D) in collaboration with SUPSI. We are currently participating in a single-center study regarding early detection and intervention for Swiss-Italian children with autism spectrum disorders. We also currently participate in a multi-center study: High Dose Steroids in Children With Stroke and Unilateral Focal Arteriopathy: Paediatric Arteriopathy Steroid Aspirin (PASTA) Project. This study aims to show that children with first stroke event due to unilateral focal cerebral arteriopathy (FCA) treated with a combination of high dose steroid and aspirin, will have better and quicker recovery of arteriopathy, better clinical functional outcome, and less recurrence compared to children treated with aspirin alone. We also participate in five multi-center registries: Project for a Swiss Cerebral

palsy register (in collaboration with the Swiss Academy of Childhood Disability), Swiss Register for Neuromuscular diseases, International Pediatric Stroke Study, Swiss neuropaediatric stroke registry, and JIRcohort registry.

Onco-hematology

PD Dr. M. Rizzi and Dr. P. Brazzola

IPSI is very active in the field of pediatric oncology studies: in fact, we participate in 38 international oncology studies, of which 36 are currently active and 2 were completed in the year 2024. Of the 36 active oncology studies, 5 are registry. Themes of these studies are various types of pediatric cancers (e.g., high risk neuroblastoma, leukemia, lymphoma, soft tissue sarcoma, etc.) and treatments/medications. We also contribute to a non-interventional study for treatment of patient with hemophilia A with and without inhibitors (EMIL, Roche).

Rheumatology

PD Dr. F. Vanoni

In 2024 IPSI conducted a single centered pilot study concerning pain evaluation by pain drawing in adolescents. Currently, we participate in an international multicenter randomized controlled trial on juvenile idiopathic arthritis, a rare pediatric rheumatologic disease: Producing an Arthritis Value-Framework with Economic Evidence - Paving the Way for Rare Childhood Disease (PAVE). One of the objectives of this study is to enhance the understanding of the impact of JIA on individuals and society. We also strictly collaborate with the CHUV for the development of observational prospective and retrospective studies on treatment and outcome in inflammatory diseases.

Pediatric Surgery

Dr. M. Mendoza, Dr. V. De Rosa and Dr. E. Montaruli

We participate in studies regarding minimally invasive surgery, orthopedics, and trauma surgery.

The main goal of the research unit is to promote high-quality pediatric clinical research in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland and to help young fellows and medical students of Swiss Universities to participate in clinical research in pediatrics. In the context of the Master medical school, in May 2024 we completed and handed in three master's theses. We are also currently involved in 11 master thesis supervision and promotion of clinical research.



Institute of Pharmacological Sciences of Southern Switzerland (ISFSI)

Prof. Alessandro Ceschi, MD, MSc
Medical and Scientific Director

The Institute of Pharmacological Sciences of Southern Switzerland (ISFSI) is committed to promoting the safe, effective, and evidence-based use of medications through its two principal divisions. The Division of Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology encompasses several specialized services, including the Pharmacogenetics Unit, the Regional Pharmacovigilance Centre, the Drug Centre, and a dedicated Research Unit. The Central Pharmacy Service comprises the Hospital Pharmacy, Clinical Pharmacy, and Public Pharmacy. By providing expert guidance to healthcare professionals, we support the safe and rational use of medications. Our overarching goal is to optimize drug therapy by enhancing therapeutic efficacy, minimizing adverse effects, and ensuring cost efficiency. In 2023, the ISFSI Research Unit and the Regional Pharmacovigilance Centre launched a collaborative project with the Dalle Molle Institute of Artificial Intelligence (IDSIA USI-SUPSI) to apply Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques in support of pharmacovigilance. The project, named “QUADRATIC: QUality Adverse Drug Reaction AcTIve Control,” received funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) at the end of 2023 and was carried out throughout 2024. Since 2016, the ISFSI Regional Pharmacovigilance Centre has been actively and continuously screening EOC patients’ electronic health records (EHRs) for keywords related to adverse drug reactions (ADRs). While this system

has helped reduce the under-reporting of unknown or unrecognized ADRs, the QUADRATIC project further advanced active pharmacovigilance by developing a highly efficient NLP-based classifier capable of systematically analysing EHRs to detect potential ADRs with improved accuracy, sensitivity and specificity. The tool is now being tested in routine practice to optimize its usability and ensure its effective integration into daily pharmacovigilance activities. By the end of 2024, the ISFSI Research Unit has further strengthened its expertise in pharmacovigilance studies utilizing disproportionality analysis as a statistical data mining approach applied to the World Health Organization’s global pharmacovigilance database, VigiBase, which contains over 30 million individual case safety reports of suspected ADRs. As an active member of the multinational working committee of the READUS PV project (<https://readus-statement.org/>), the ISFSI Research Unit contributed to the development of the first reporting guideline for studies using disproportionality analysis in spontaneous reporting systems. Over the course of the year, two key articles – one detailing the development of the guideline and the other providing its explanation and elaboration – were published in a leading peer-reviewed scientific journal in the field of drug safety. These publications have played a crucial role in raising awareness and adoption of the READUS

guidelines among researchers conducting disproportionality studies, authors of scientific articles, scientific journals, and peer reviewers. By providing a structured methodological framework, they have contributed to strengthening the scientific rigor of disproportionality analyses in pharmacovigilance, ensuring more reliable and reproducible results. In 2024, research activities at ISFSI employed disproportionality analysis in pharmacovigilance for two main purposes: First, under the mandate of and in collaboration with Swissmedic, ISFSI conducted disproportionality analyses in VigiBase to monitor the safety profile of selected drugs for which periodic safety update report (PSUR) submission requirements had expired. However, Swissmedic considered it beneficial to continue post-marketing surveillance in Switzerland, comparing national data with the global database VigiBase. By the end of 2024, this activity identified a signal of disproportionate reporting for agranulocytosis associated with ocrelizumab in Switzerland. While the Swiss product label lists neutropenia as an adverse effect, agranulocytosis is not mentioned, neither in the Swiss nor in the European and U.S. monographs. This finding prompted discussions within Swissmedic regarding the need for further confirmation and assessment of the signal. If substantiated, the issue may be formally raised with the marketing authorization holder, potentially leading to an update of the product’s summary of characteristics. The second purpose for which ISFSI applied disproportionality analysis in 2024 was to conduct pharmacovigilance studies using VigiBase. A key research focus for ISFSI is drug safety in pregnancy. In collaboration with neurologists from the EOC and the specialized Swiss and the UK Teratology Information Services, ISFSI investigated the safety profiles of several drugs during pregnancy. Among these, calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) antagonists for the treatment of episodic and chronic migraine, monoclonal antibodies inhibiting proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (PCSK9) used for dyslipidaemia, pregabalin, and inhibitors of Janus kinases (JAKs). By incorporating post-marketing spontaneous

reports of suspected adverse drug reactions – reflecting real-world medication use – this research helped fill critical gaps in the limited knowledge on drug safety during pregnancy. In addition to pregnancy-related studies, ISFSI continued its research in 2024 on the safety of immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI) monoclonal antibodies. Using disproportionality analysis, ISFSI examined late-onset immune-related adverse events, defined as those occurring three months or more after the completion of the immunotherapy. These events, increasingly recognized and debated in international discussions as “late toxicities,” remain poorly understood. By leveraging VigiBase, which enables long-term surveillance, ISFSI described a significant number of relevant spontaneous reports and identified determinants associated with increased reporting of late toxicity with ICIs in VigiBase. In 2024, ISFSI conducted several research studies in collaboration with the EOC Stroke Centre. One study based on the Swiss Stroke Registry investigated sex differences in the functional outcomes of intravenous thrombolysis among patients with lacunar stroke. Additionally, two studies were conducted using data from the prospective EndoVascular treatment and Thrombolysis for Ischemic Stroke Patients (EVA-TRISP) multinational registry. The first examined sex differences in outcomes following endovascular therapy (either bridging therapy or direct mechanical thrombectomy) in patients with prior antiplatelet therapy. The second focused on patients with large vessel occlusion stroke of the anterior circulation treated with direct endovascular therapy, assessing the impact of prior antiplatelet therapy on both functional and safety outcomes. ISFSI is an official sentinel centre for the European Drug Emergency Network Plus (Euro-DEN Plus) Project, which collects data on Emergency Department (ED) presentations for acute recreational drug toxicity across Europe and neighbouring countries. The Euro-DEN Plus database offers valuable insights into the epidemiology of ED visits due to acute recreational drug toxicity and serves as a systematic and structured resource for toxicological surveillance. Last year, ISFSI

contributed to a study comparing the clinical features and outcomes of acute toxicity caused by recreational use of cannabis versus synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists, given that cannabis is the most commonly used recreational drug worldwide and synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists represent the largest group of new psychoactive substances.



Institute of Laboratory Medicine (EOLAB)

Dr. Franco Keller, PhD
Director

The Institute of Laboratory Medicine (EOLAB) was set up to meet the requirements of modern clinical laboratory medicine. EOLAB recognizes the importance of research into its activity to be continuously up-to-date and to offer the best service and collaboration to all medical departments.

The collaboration between EOLAB, the CTU-EOC, and ICT Area permitted during 2020 the creation of the EOC Biobank. The headquarters of the EOC Biobank is located inside the Microbiology Service EOLAB (SMIC). During 2024 EOLAB continuously collaborates with EOC Biobank providing infrastructure, logistic support and technical staff.

In 2024 EOLAB activated 2 new collaboration studies with a total of 27 collaborations in progress during 2024. The EOLAB specialists are actively involved in several nationally and international scientific society boards and scientific working groups.

EOLAB staff is also actively active in scientific working group and experts roundtable in several national and international scientific societies.

Microbiology Service (SMIC)

Dr L. Muller

The Microbiology Service (SMIC) is involved in a Swiss network for the implementation of Antimicrobial Stewardship in Swiss Hospitals (StAR-3) as well as in the Swiss commission for clinical microbiology (CCCM), promoting good standards in clinical microbiology laboratories.

In collaboration with the Infectious diseases service, SMIC participated in the INFLUENT Trial, a multi-centre study evaluating the efficacy of baloxavir marboxil in patients with influenza as well as a study about the invasive pneumococcal disease in a non-vaccinated population.

In 2024 SMIC continued to collaborate with Prof. Sallusto research group at the IRB, investigating the lymphocytic response development induced by yeast, fungi and bacteria.

Neurological disease and viral Infectious

Dr. E. Pianezzi

SMIC collaborates with INSI on a research project to establish a proven correlation between Hepatitis E viral infections and neurological manifestation and to evaluate Hepatitis E virus (HEV) involvement in Guillain-Barré Syndrome. The project has been extended toward additional viral agent, which could be implicated as immune triggers in neuropathic amyotrophy.

National Legionella Reference Centre

Dr. V. Gaia

SMIC hosts the National Legionella Reference Centre and contributes to national collaborations and international projects on the epidemiology and spread of legionellosis in Switzerland. In particular, in 2024 we participated in

SwissLEGIO, a nationwide case-control and molecular source attribution study on legionellosis in Switzerland organized by Swiss TPH in cooperation with the Federal Office of Public Health and the major university hospitals in Switzerland including EOC.

Thanks to the hosting of the national HIV and HCV cohort studies SMIC participate at national projects such as “B-Free” e “Shringr”HIV”.

Laboratory of Clinical Biochemistry and Pharmacology
Dr. M. Cantù

The Clinical Biochemistry and Pharmacology Laboratory (BFC) is involved in a European network for the harmonization of steroid hormone quantitation in mass spectrometry. In collaboration with Department of Medicine (Prof. L. Gabutti) BFC is evaluating the impact of steroid hormones and metals on the arterial stiffness.

BFC has a close collaboration with the pharmacology unit of the University of Turin and Amedeo di Savoia Hospital in Turin (Prof. A. D’Avolio) for the development of project in pharmacology and pharmacogenomics fields.

Cantonal Institute of Pathology (ICP)

Prof. Luca Mazzucchelli, MD
Medical and Scientific Director

The “Istituto Cantonale di Patologia - EOC” (ICP) is actively involved in various research projects which aim to identify new methods to be introduced into routine diagnostics or to identify new markers that can be used both in prognosis and in predicting the efficacy of chemotherapeutic treatments: ICP research is essentially aimed at the molecular characterisation of diseases, mainly those in the field of oncology. IOSI/IOR are privileged research partner of the ICP, with particular emphasis on cancers of the gastrointestinal tract and thoracic cavity, hematolymphoid neoplasms and urogenital cancers. Currently, ICP participates in almost 50 clinical trials and collaborates with various Swiss and international pathology institutes.

Digital Pathology and Artificial Intelligence
L. Mazzucchelli, V. Martin, F. Jauk

Digitalization of pathology offers new opportunities to improve clinical service but also to develop research projects. The Institute of Pathology is currently going through a gradual transition to digital pathology. In parallel, working groups have been formed in collaboration with Delle Molle Institute for artificial intelligence to develop new diagnostic algorithms but also artificial intelligence applications to exploit the data that will be produced. The potential is enormous and the ICP remains open and available for any project in collaboration with other institutes/departments EOC. Specifically, the Institute is working on

a project to efficiently reconstruct the histological cross-sections of large tumours that do not fit a single microscope slide and thus have to be split in multiple smaller fragments. This reconstruction process is currently performed by pathologists in an approximate manner. An AI-assisted tool would allow more accurate assessment of important parametrs useful in patient management, such as the relationship of a tumor to resection margins or tumor regression in patients receiving neoadjuvant treatment. Such a tool has enormous potential in terms of the increased quality of anatomo-pathological diagnoses, saving time in issuing diagnoses, improving patient treatment, and standardizing important parameters evaluated in clinical trials. A grant application has recently been approved to Innosuisse.

An additional collaborative project aims to develop and validate a robust deep learning-based classifier for a more precise and reproducible diagnosis of nodal marginal zone B-cell lymphoma versus mimickers. This will be achieved by utilizing a multimodal dataset to train Deep Learning Models. The multimodal dataset includes patients’ clinical annotations, extensive molecular profiling (exome sequencing and DNA methylation), centralized pathology review consensus diagnosis and annotations, along with high-dimensional data from hematoxylin-eosin and immunohistochemistry-stained whole-slide imaging. State-of-the-art Multimodal Deep Learning techniques will be adopted, also relying on Self-Supervised paradigms that enable learning powerful pattern recognition

The outcomes of this comprehensive interdisciplinary approach could impact on the future lymphoma classification, and also pave the way for similar applications in other lymphomas and solid tumors. By improving diagnostic accuracy and complementing the efforts of pathologists and clinicians, these advancements may improve decision-making and therapeutic strategies, ultimately benefiting patients. A grant application has recently been submitted.

Analysis of circulating tumour DNA in patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) undergoing immunotherapy with checkpoint inhibitors

M. Frattini

For patients with metastatic lung cancer and a high expression of the immuno-oncological marker PD-L1, therapy with the immune checkpoint inhibitor pembrolizumab or atezolizumab is the standard therapy. Recent phase II clinical trials and interim analysis from phase III trials have demonstrated a great benefit from the addition of tiragolumab (another checkpoint inhibitor) to atezolizumab in patients charcaterized by PD-L1 expression >50%. Today, the response of these patients to therapy is checked every 9-12 weeks using computer tomography. This means that in a substantial proportion of patients, tumour progression is only detected when the general condition is worst and further tumour therapy is no longer possible. Recent data seem to indicate that a quantitative decrease in the analysis of DNA in plasma (ctDNA) correlates with the response to immunotherapy. The aim of the study is to use the quantitative progression of ctDNA to optimise the therapy. Patients with an early clearance in ctDNA (>90%) compared to the initial level will continue with immunotherapy with the combination of atezolizumab and tiragolumab checkpoint inhibitors. Patients without a corresponding drop in ctDNA will be randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups: either they will also be further treated with atezolizumab+tiragolumab alone or they will receive platinum-based chemotherapy in addition to the combination of checkpoint

inhibitors. With this study, we want to investigate whether early intensification of therapy in patients with insufficient drop in ctDNA after 2 cycles of immunotherapy may lead to a better prognosis and we want to investigate whether ctDNA measurement is a suitable biomarker for risk stratification and therapy adjustment. This is a study co-directed with IOSI (Dr. P. Froesch), more than 10 Swiss centres (through SAKK involvement) and more than 10 European centres (from France, Spain, Germany, Italy). The trial has received the financial support of OncoSuisse/Krebsliga and will receive some funds from Roche.

Sensitive diagnosis, prognosis and treatment planning on open platform of glioma brain tumours

M. Frattini

Brain tumors are one of the most aggressive and common cancers. About 28% of brain tumors are gliomas; glioblastoma (GBM) subtype is found in 17% out of this group. The classification and the treatment of gliomas is strictly correlated to the evaluation of several molecular markers (i.e. mutations in IDH1, IDH2, hTERT, H3F3A, HIST1H3B genes; MGMT (O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase) promoter methylation). The genetic status of IDH1, IDH2, H3F3A and HIST1H3B is fundamental for a proper classification of the tumor; MGMT promoter methylation status has clinical relevance because patients with hypermethylation benefit more from the combination of chemo (based on temozolomide) and radiotherapy; finally, TERT promoter genetic status is linked to adverse prognosis and to diagnosis of oligodendroglioma or glioblastoma. Nowadays, the available molecular assays are essentially made on tissue samples and suffer from method variation, low sensitivity and technical barriers. On these bases, the main purpose of our project is to improve these analyses providing a new, more sensitive and faster real-time PCR based methodology in collaboration with PentaBase ApS, a Danish company with which we have excellent collaborative relationships from years. In collaboration with EOC Neurosurgery and

Neuro-oncology, liquid biopsies will be collected from patients affected by gliomas and evaluated with the newly developed assays.

Personalized cancer monitoring

M. Frattini

Monitoring of cancer progression is mainly done by bi-monthly imaging of the tumor. Cancer patients can be better treated if their cancers are monitored closely. PCR-based genetic analysis of cancer specific mutations is a fast, inexpensive alternative. However, this method is only available for patients carrying typical (hotspot) mutations in a few cancers. Using simple blood samples, we will enable sensitive and inexpensive monitoring of all cancers for true personalized treatments. Based on next generation sequencing (NGS) data from the clinics from the solid, diagnostic biopsy, in collaboration with a Danish company we will design, manufacture and validate tumor- and patient specific, real-time PCR-based monitoring and ctDNA purification assays for blood samples. We will sell at least twenty assays per patient to the clinic, allowing for bi-weekly monitoring and early response to resistance acquisition of tumors.

Investigation of the role played by HLA typing and PD-L1 polymorphisms on the efficacy of first-line immune checkpoint inhibitors in non-small cell lung cancer patients with PD-L1 overexpression (TPS≥50%): a retrospective study

M. Frattini

Immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICI) are a well-established first-line treatment for patients characterized by a PD-L1 TPS (tumor proportion score) ≥50% and without alterations in the following targetable molecular markers: EGFR, ALK, ROS1, RET. The evaluation of a PD-L1 expression ≥50% and the absence of mutations in the aforementioned oncogenic drivers are two essential conditions for the treatment with ICIs. However, in a non-negligible portion of patients, these features alone could not

be enough for the prediction of a durable good response to this treatment. The aim of the proposal is to investigate how intrinsic or acquired genetic characteristics could influence response to immunotherapies in advanced NSCLC. In particular, the focus will be on the influence of HLA and PD-L1 genes polymorphisms and of KRAS mutations on the response to ICIs. Patients, under the supervision of co-applicant Dr.P. Froesch, oncologist of IOSI, will be enrolled at IOSI and at the Kantonsspital Graubünden of Chur, and to speed-up the recruitment also in two Italian centers with which there is a long and fruitful collaboration (Ospedale Nuovo, Legnano, Milan, Italy; and Humanitas Hospital, Catania, Italy). The project received partial financial support from Fondazione Ticinese contro il Cancro.

Helicobacter pylori Resistance to Clarithromycin and Levofloxacin in the Ticino Resident Population

S. Epistolio, R. Sarro, L. Giudici

The effectiveness of Helicobacter pylori (Hp) eradication therapy depends on the combination of at least two antibiotics and proton pump inhibitors, administered over a sufficiently long period (10–14 days). To improve the eradication rate— which is approximately 70% in first-line therapy— and to avoid unnecessary treatments with potential side effects, an antibiogram is increasingly being requested. However, this analysis is time-consuming, logistically demanding, and depends on the successful cultivation of the bacterium, which occurs in only 50–60% of cases. At ICP, we have validated a molecular pathology test based on the Real-Time PCR method, using formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded biopsy samples, to detect potential Hp resistance to clarithromycin and levofloxacin. These two antibiotics have Hp resistance rates as high as 30% in Europe. A retrospective study on gastric biopsies is currently underway to determine the prevalence of Helicobacter antibiotic resistance among patients residing in Ticino and to assess whether resistance rates have changed over the years. This study is funded by the Institute's Scientific Fund.

Department of Medicine EOC

Brenno Balestra, MD
Head of Department
Prof. Enos Bernasconi, MD
Head of Local Research Unit

The Department of Medicine of EOC (Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale) serves as a hub for cutting-edge research and clinical innovation. Dedicated to improving patient outcomes and advancing medical knowledge, the department supports and coordinates research initiatives across diverse disciplines through its Local Research Unit (LRU). This document outlines the department's scientific activities and highlights the ongoing research conducted by its various groups and units. Each initiative reflects the department's commitment to fostering a culture of scientific excellence and multidisciplinary collaboration. These research efforts not only expand scientific knowledge but also translate into tangible benefits for patients and the broader community. By promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and maintaining a patient-centered focus, the department continues to drive progress across multiple medical fields.

General Internal Medicine
Dr. B. Balestra, Prof. Dr. L. Gabutti, Prof. Dr. W. Ageno, PD Dr. O. Giannini, Prof. Dr. A. Ogna, Prof. Dr. M. Pons

The research focus of Prof. L. Gabutti includes the appropriateness of care, particularly in relation to medication prescriptions such as antibiotics, antipsychotics, benzodiazepines, and statins. Additional research areas include the investigation of risk factors that contribute to barriers in healthcare access and the exploration of social prescribing as

a therapeutic tool. His group is also studying the cardiovascular effects of dietary salt intake, the circadian rhythm of urinary electrolyte excretion, and the impact of air pollution and heavy metals on vascular health. The MabStaph study, an observational cohort study led by PD Dr. O. Giannini in collaboration with Humabs BioMed SA and a team of the Division of infectious diseases, aimed to investigate patients with Staphylococcus aureus infections. This study was concluded in May 2024. The collected epidemiological data, along with humoral and cellular immune response profiles, will be analyzed and correlated with the clinical characteristics of the patients.

Infectious Diseases
Prof. Dr. E. Bernasconi

The division's most significant research collaboration continues to be the Swiss HIV Cohort Study (SHCS) (www.shcs.ch), one of the world's largest epidemiological and clinical studies in the field of HIV. Within this framework, the unit is involved in several epidemiological and clinical studies. The HIV Cardio-Renal and Metabolic complications (HIVCream) project was initiated as a pilot study supported by an unrestricted pharmaceutical grant (Dr. B. Barda, PD Dr. M. Bongiovanni). This project aims to enhance the multidisciplinary management of people living with HIV (PLWH), with active surveillance for cardiovascular comorbidities using a user-friendly, cost-effective algorithm.

Additionally, international studies conducted at our division are testing the antiretroviral dual therapy islatravir/doravirine, with reduced islatravir dosage to minimize the risk of lymphocytopenia. An antibiotic stewardship intervention to reduce carbapenem use in hospitals resulted in a successful >15% reduction in carbapenem consumption (M. Bongiovanni et al.).

Nephrology
Prof. Dr. P. Cippà

Our group actively promotes research projects across various areas of clinical nephrology. We leverage artificial intelligence to predict acute kidney injury in hospitalized patients and complications in patients on peritoneal dialysis (Dr. A. Bellasi, Dr. L. Ruinelli). Additionally, we apply single-cell transcriptomics to enhance the understanding of the mechanisms underlying kidney diseases (Dr. A. Rinaldi). Dr. A. Bellasi has further developed his research on the cardiovascular effects of FGF23. In the field of hemodialysis, we are engaged in multiple initiatives, including international studies on vascular access monitoring and the development of computational models to anticipate complications and personalize hemodialysis prescriptions (Dr. A. Bellasi, Dr. D. Giunzioni, Dr. S. Pianca). Our research laboratory, integrated with LRT-EOC, investigates mechanisms of kidney injury and repair and their relevance in various clinical conditions (Prof. Dr. P. Cippà, Dr. A. Rinaldi). Looking ahead, in collaboration with doctors and nurses, we aim to explore the use of artificial intelligence as a tool to support nurse-led anemia management in dialysis patients (Dr. A. Bellasi, Dr. L. Ruinelli, M.E. Brodeur).

Hepatology
PD Dr. B. Terziroli Beretta-Piccoli

Cholestatic autoimmune liver diseases impose a high symptom burden, significantly affecting the quality of life of our patients. Cholestatic pruritus, one of the most debilitating

symptoms, is now being targeted by a new drug class—ileal bile acid transporter (IBAT) inhibitors—which are showing promising results. We are recruiting patients with cholestatic pruritus due to primary biliary cholangitis in a randomized international trial testing Volixibat, an IBAT inhibitor. In collaboration with Prof. Maria Caiata at SUPSI, we are conducting a study on the quality of life of patients with vascular liver diseases and their social impact.

Pneumology
Dr. M. Bernasconi

A longitudinal study at EOC of 39 patients with ARDS due to SARS-CoV-2 requiring mechanical ventilation revealed significant long-term physical and functional limitations (Dr. M. Bernasconi, Prof. A. Ogna). A collaborative study with the Institute for Research in Biomedicine investigating alveolar lymphocyte responses to bacterial lysate OM-85 identified unique pro-inflammatory gene signatures. Dr. A. Casutt is co-investigator of the PneumoLaus cohort in Lausanne (CHUV), which analyzes the relationship between respiratory, cardiovascular, and psychiatric diseases. In the current year, we described the association between depressive/anxiety disorders and pulmonary diseases in the community. We further described the association between small airways disease and cardiac conditions, with ongoing studies on the additional role of environmental factors in collaboration with Prof. A. Ogna. A project is underway concerning the association between metabolism and lung function assessment (Dr. A. Casutt). Dr. Casutt is the recipient of the Lega Polmonare Ticinese Grant 2024 and the Early Career EOC Grant for a new project in 2025.

Endocrinology and Diabetology
Prof. Dr. P. Trimboli

Research focuses on thyroid disorders and diabetes, with successful collaborations within EOC and internationally, resulting in multiple high-impact publications. Studies coordinated by Prof. P. Trimboli have addressed: 1. the performance of Thyroid Imaging Reporting

and Data Systems (TIRADS) in diagnosing thyroid cancer, 2. thyroid nodule diagnostic assessment, treatment, and the impact of Artificial Intelligence in this field, and 3. the relationship between thyroid function and microbiota. Studies on type 1 diabetes in scuba diving have been published in leading journals (Dr. E. Gamarra). Further projects on osteoporosis, shared with INSI, are ongoing, with initial results published (Dr. C. Camponovo).

Dermatology, Allergology, and Clinical immunology
PD Dr. H. Beltraminelli

PD Dr. C. Mangas is mostly active in the field of melanoma and skin cancer. In collaboration with the research unit from IOSI, she is the principal investigator in three international and multicentric clinical studies in adjuvant, neoadjuvant and metastatic setting. Moreover, she is principal investigator in two observational studies: Dermatological toxicity in cancer patients focus on vitiligo-like depigmentation (Derma-Tox) and Efficacy and Toxicity of Immunotherapy in Melanoma Patients: A Ten-Year Retrospective Analysis at IOSI (2014-2024) with focus in analyzing time of immunotherapy infusion (ChronoMela). PD Dr. H. Beltraminelli is active in skin lymphoma studies and humanitarian dermatopathology projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. Notably, he coordinates a project aiming at the development of dermatopathology in Subsaharan Africa. PD Dr. M. Bergmann’s work spans food and drug allergy. He wrote an extensive review on the utility of basophil activation test in the diagnosis of food allergy. Additionally, he participated in a study on chronic urticaria linked to SARS-CoV2 mRNA vaccines in collaboration with the CHUV of Lausanne.

Clinical Nutrition
Dr. N. Ossola

The ACTIDIET-Pro pilot study on Mediterranean/low-lipid diets combined with physical activity for prostate cancer patients, involving Dr. N. Ossola, Dr. M. Quarenghi

and several dietitians, continues under the leadership of PD Dr. Ursula Vogl (IOSI). Additionally, data collection for the MenuCH-Kids study, the first national nutrition study of Swiss children and adolescents, involving the dietician A. Giana along with Prof G. Simonetti and Dr. L. Garzoni (IPSI), was completed in September 2024, with initial results expected in mid-2025.

Laboratory Research
[See chapter III on the Laboratories for Translational Research.](#)

Department of Surgery EOC

PD Davide La Regina, MD
Head of Department

Orthopaedics and Traumatology
Prof. Dr. C. Candrian, Prof. Dr. G. Filardo, PhD MBA

The Orthopaedics and Traumatology Clinical Research Team is a well-established and growing reality in the EOC research panorama, with the aim to improve the current knowledge as well as the treatment strategies in the field of orthopaedics and traumatology. The research activity reflects the division of the clinical practice in 5 teams: knee, shoulder-elbow, hip, foot-ankle, and tea hand-wrist. The individual expertise of each team and the collaboration among them focused on conducting systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and high-quality clinical trials to increase the strength of the current knowledge and explore new promising topics under the guidance and coordination of an international leading expert in the field of musculoskeletal research Prof. Dr. G. Filardo. Among the topics covered by the research efforts of 2024, knee osteoarthritis and chondral lesions management were widely explored subjects, with the investigation of rehabilitative strategies, intra-articular injective options, and knee replacement surgery, including the use of robotic technology, as well as innovative cartilage defects repair options. Knee surgery studies also covered anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction and meniscal repair. Shoulder surgery research addressed different aspects of arthroscopic rotator cuff repair and shoulder arthroplasty, while hip surgery investigations focused on intramedullary nailing and hip replacement surgery, exploring the use of robotic technology also in this context. Foot

and ankle studies covered various aspects of ankle fractures management as well as Achilles tendon pathologies, plantar fasciitis, and hallux valgus treatment, whereas hand and wrist research addressed carpal tunnel syndrome, distal radius fractures synthesis, and finger osteoarthritis. In 2024, the team published several articles in peer-reviewed journals. Currently, the team is managing 21 active clinical studies, including 9 randomized controlled trials, and participates in multi-centre collaborations with prominent European research institutions. The research group and the Orthopaedics and Traumatology Service also offer an opportunity to all residents as well as the students from USI to move their first steps or deepening their knowledge in the field of orthopaedics and traumatology, and the high research level was strengthened by the introduction of a PhD program with USI on musculoskeletal research. The quality achieved was confirmed by the obtainment of the ranking A1 as orthopaedics and traumatology training centre by the Swiss FMH in 2023.

Visceral Surgery

Colorectal surgery
Prof. Dr. D. Christoforidis, PD Dr. S.G. Popeskou, Dr. G. Staccini, Dr. G. Bianco, Dr. Petrusic A, Dr. F. Iaquinandi, PD Dr. F. Mongelli

In 2024, our research activity continued in the same lines of the past years, in both clinical and translational research. Larger projects include the launch of the ICARUS

study that assesses prospectively the impact of complications on the quality of recovery after surgery, and a new study across the 4 hospitals at the EOC, to examine the impact of lymphatic versus vascular invasion in non-metastatic colon cancer on oncological outcomes. Other interesting projects included the study on the necessity of histopathological analysis in patients undergoing sigmoidectomy for diverticular disease, a metaanalysis on the necessity of completion right colectomy for LAMN lesions of the appendix and a video publication on the step by step robotic surgery technique on the KONO-S anastomosis for Crohn's disease. In translational research, in collaboration with the laboratory led by Prof. G. Iezzi, we continued the work on the relationship between microbiome and anastomotic leakage (MicrobAL project). The goal is to develop preventive strategies by pre-operative microbiome modulation. The team also pursued national and international collaborations: we participated at the Swiss colorectal working group to reach a consensus on management of acute diverticulitis; on an international level, we collaborated with the REACCT, STARSurg, EuroSurg, GlobalSurg groups joining new studies (ALLIGATOR and APOLLO study).

Hepato-pancreatico-biliary surgery

Dr. A. Cristaudi, Dr. R. Roesel, Dr. L. Bernardi, Dr. G. Pozza, Dr. E. Garosi, Prof. Dr. P. Majno-Hurst

The focus of our research was kept on the use of minimally invasive techniques for hepatobiliary surgery, with particular interest in the robotic approach for liver resections. A study focusing on the oncologic outcomes of robotic hepatectomy for hepatocellular carcinoma in cirrhotic patients, in collaboration with the University of Pisa (Italy), has been accepted for publication. Two original projects on robotic liver surgery are ongoing: the first is investigating the advantages of robotic platform for repeat liver resections; the second is focused on the learning curve of robotic hepatectomies and will investigate the learning process following previous training in laparoscopic hepatectomy: this latter is a second step of

analysis published by our group earlier in this year on robotic learning curve without previous minimally invasive training. On an international level, we participated in two multicentric randomized controlled studies that have now completed enrollment (Bi-Le trial and NutriWhi). We have joined new multicentric projects including one on the impact of enhanced recovery protocols on oncologic outcome in liver surgery and on the impact of prolonged antibioprophylaxis in patients undergoing biliary drainage prior duodenopancreatectomy for pancreatic adenocarcinoma. We contributed to a milestone prospective randomized trial on the role of liver transplantation for colorectal liver metastases, as part of the selection committee for eligible non-resectable patients, confirming our unit's authority in the field.

Bariatric surgery

PD Dr. F. Garofalo, Dr. M. Marengo, PD Dr. F. Mongelli

In 2024, our research focused on various aspects of bariatric surgery, including the multidisciplinary approach and the technical challenges of revisional and conversional procedures performed using both laparoscopy and robotic-assisted techniques. We collaborated with other bariatric centers across Switzerland, resulting in several published papers and ongoing projects. Additionally, our studies explored the economic and financial impact of widespread adoption of robotic-assisted techniques, particularly their cost-effectiveness. Future research aims to optimize surgical pathways and conduct further cost-effectiveness analyses comparing laparoscopic and robotic-assisted bariatric surgery.

Robotic visceral surgery

PD Dr. D. La Regina, Dr. R. Pini, Dr. JMA Toti, PD Dr. F. Mongelli

The Ospedale Regionale di Bellinzona e Valli is conducting numerous studies on the use of robotic technology in visceral surgery. In 2024, the research focused on its application in urgent settings, hiatal hernia repair, and complex abdominal wall reconstructions.

Current research is now focusing on integrating patient-reported and functional outcomes into future prospective studies, which are expected to add a significant contribution to the existing literature.

Vascular Surgery and Angiology

Dr. L. Giovannacci, Dr. G. Prouse, Dr. A. Robaldo, PD Dr. H. Stricker, PD Dr. R. Del Giorno et al.

In 2024, a key focus of vascular research has been laying the groundwork for the development of practice recommendations regarding the use of physician-modified endografts (PMEGs) to treat complex abdominal aortic lesions. We have conducted a global survey to gather insights into current practices regarding the indication, the planning and the technical aspects of graft modification for this type of surgery. The data collected will serve as the foundation for an expert consensus, developed through the Delphi method, to establish treatment and procedural guidelines for this off-label approach. In addition, we have launched a multicenter retrospective study (COMPLEXA) to assess the impact of suprarenal clamping on patient outcomes in open surgical treatment of complex aortic lesions. This study aims to evaluate the quality of open repair and compare it with outcomes from complex endovascular procedures. The team is also exploring the development of machine-learning algorithms to identify radiomic features that could predict aggressive type II endoleaks before endovascular aortic repair (EVAR). This would be a significant advancement, as type II endoleaks are a major cause of high reintervention rates following EVAR. Lastly, our research in angiology has focused on identifying emerging risk factors, such as environmental pollutants, in the development of peripheral arterial disease (PAD) and venous thromboembolic disease (VTE). The creation of a dedicated registry will facilitate the systematic collection of clinical, epidemiological, and therapeutic data for both conditions, with the goal of improving prevention, early diagnosis, and patient management.

Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgery

Prof. Dr. Y. Harder, Prof. Dr. D. Schmauss et al.

Projects in clinical research

Like in the last years, our clinical research efforts focus on the assessment of safety, efficacy and outcome of different reconstructive procedures after breast cancer surgery. The various collaborative projects, as reported in last year's scientific report, are ongoing. The multicentric randomized study assessing advantages and disadvantages of pre- and subpectoral implant-based breast reconstruction, which is funded by SNSF/SAKK (collaboration with Prof. Dr. W. Weber, University Hospital Basel) has finished the recruitment of patients and is in phase of follow-up; The multicentric study evaluating the rate of ischemia-associated delayed wound healing or skin necrosis after repetitive local heat preconditioning of the skin in reduction mammoplasty (collaboration with Prof. Dr. med. H.G. Machens, TUM Munich) and the multicentric observational cohort study on immediate breast reconstruction following mastectomy (IRMA; CSSI, EOC) are ongoing. Our two-centre study regarding the reimbursement policy of insurance companies for reduction mammoplasty in patients suffering from breast hypertrophy has been finished and accepted for publication. One of our previous residents Dr. A. Navarra achieved her doctoral thesis (USI) with this study. In a further collaboration with IIMSI (PD Dr. S. Schiaffino, CSSI, EOC), we elucidate in an ongoing study the benefits of autologous fat grafting in hybrid breast reconstruction (i.e. using autologous fat grafting and implants) by radiological and clinical means, another work that has been accepted for publication (doctoral thesis USI: L. Costa). Like mentioned in the scientific report 2023 the study regarding patient satisfaction after oncoplastic breast surgery (OPBS) in correlation with tumour volume and breast size is ongoing. The hypothesis is, that overall patient satisfaction is higher after receiving oncoplastic breast surgery (i.e. intraglandular breast tissue remodelling) after tumorectomy in combination with adjuvant radiation therapy when compared to simple tumorectomy and irradiation. Furthermore, we finished the two studies

investigating the benefits of using tranexamic acid in patients undergoing reduction mammoplasties or mastectomies. We were able to publish those two studies in 2024. The study regarding the effects of tranexamic acid in patients undergoing abdominoplasties is finished and the manuscript is currently under review.

One of our residents, Dr. S. Magni finished her doctoral thesis USI with one study and one of our USI-students (L. Guggeheim) achieved his masterthesis with the other study. In a more “historical and political” project, we sent a nation-wide survey asking the different hospitals and private clinics about their microvascular activity and its evolution in the last two decades, which disclosed a comprehensive offer of microvascular reconstructions spread over the whole country. Furthermore, our department participates in an ongoing clinical study (collaboration with the Department of Plastic, Reconstructive, Aesthetic and Hand Surgery, University Hospital Basel) which compares Surgical versus Conservative Complex Physical Decongestion Therapy for Chronic Breast Cancer-Related Lymphedema.

Projects in basic research

Dr. F. Bonomi is finishing her research fellowship (MD-PhD) in Germany at the Institute for Clinical & Experimental Surgery of the Saarland University, Homburg/Saar in Germany (Prof. Dr. M.W. Laschke) with a highly valuable collaboration on projects, assessing the effect of autologous nanofat grafting on healing of complicated wounds and strategies of cryopreservation of nanofat to be repeatedly used in a rodent model. Dr. V. Pruzzo will follow Dr. Bonomi and has already began her research fellowship (MD-PhD) in Homburg, in order to continue the basic research project and the collaboration with our department. Prof. Dr. D. Schmauss is collaborating with the Department of Plastic Surgery and Hand Surgery of the Technical University Munich on an experimental in vivo burn project in rodents.

Urology

Prof. Dr. A. Gallina, Prof. Dr. N. Fossati

The research activity in urology is mainly focused on the field of uro-oncology. In

particular, the urology service contributes to an ongoing clinical trial (SAKK 06/19, NCT04630730) including patients affected by muscle-invasive bladder cancer. The aim of this prospective study is to optimize neo-adjuvant therapies for patients candidates to radical cystectomy. Indeed, these patients are treated with intravesical recombinant BCG followed by peri-operative chemo-immunotherapy. Furthermore, the urology service significantly contributes to ambitious translational projects, in collaboration with the laboratories of IOR. In particular, in one study (SUNSHINE-BIO), the molecular basis of differential responses to prostate cancer treatments are assessed in a comprehensive retrospective cohort. In a second study, the relationship between urological cancers and microplastics levels in blood and urine is evaluated. Finally, the unit of functional urology recently started scientific projects focused on chronic pelvic pain and pudendal neuropathy, in collaboration with INSI.

Otorhinolaryngology

Prof. Dr. M. Trimarchi, KD Dr. R. Spasiano, Dr. F. Barucca, Dr. E. Jacot

The Otorhinolaryngology research activity reflects the division of the clinical practice in 4 topics: otology, rhinology, laryngology and oncology and neck. The otology group has a close multi-year collaboration with the EOC Neuroradiology service, for the benefit of a more precise diagnostic accuracy and a more efficient therapeutic planning, has launched with it a study on high resolution radiological imaging of the ear with flat panel CT technique, aimed at validating its standardized use in the planning of functional otologic surgery. We are also studying the clinical-radiological correlations in Menière's syndrome, a disabling disease of the auditory and vestibular apparatus with magnetic resonance imaging including hydrops protocol, through a retrospective analysis of a series of cases, among the largest in Europe. We are running another study on patients suffering from sudden idiopathic sensorineural deafness, and we are a reference center in the cantonal territory since 2017. Regarding rhinology we have a collaboration with Department of Aerospace Sciences and Technologies, Politecnico di Milano, and we

are studying the effect of nasal surgery with computational fluid dynamics. In the same field we have started a collaboration with the INSI-EOC on Obstructive Sleep Apnea Syndrome and we are evaluating the results of therapies with sleep endoscopies. We have a collaboration with University Vita Salute Milan on hypereosinophilia during dupilumab treatment in patients with nasal polyposis and we take part to an international project on biologic therapies. We are outlining guidelines for the surgical treatment of patients with cocaineinduced midline destruction lesions with an international collaboration. In laryngology there is a collaboration with INSI-EOC in the treatment of patients with botulinum toxin injections for adductor spasmodic dysphonia. In oncology we are developing with IOSI a common database on Head and Neck cancer to evaluate our results. Finally, a further project concerns abscesses of the deep head and neck districts, an emerging condition following the Covid pandemic, in order to offer an overview of optimal diagnostic and therapeutic management, based fundamentally on timely case management and close multidisciplinary collaboration with the Infectious Disease, Intensive Care and Radiology services.

Endocrine Surgery

Dr. K. Galetti, Dr. P. Makovac, Dr. G. Peloni et al.

Research in endocrine surgery is collaborative with different EOC services and international groups and registries (Eurocrine). With Prof. Dr. P. Trimboli from the endocrinology service, we studied the causes of potentially elevated serum calcitonin values in patients in whom medullary carcinoma has been histologically excluded. Another study is under evaluation for publication regarding the ultrasound evaluation of normal parathyroid glands, their identification rate, topography and the role of any underlying thyroid pathology. With the nuclear medicine and radiology service, we run several collaborative research projects (choline PET in hyperparathyroidism, thermoablation of thyroid nodules vs. surgery, etc.). On an international level, we are participating in a multicentre international study (Mendrisio, Geneva and several Italian centres starting from Trieste) on non-invasive follicular thyroid tumours with uncertain

malignancy potential (NIFTP), a recently defined cancer entity. We are also participating in a national study on the necessity of having an euthyroid status before surgery in Graves' disease - a current topic of debate among endocrine surgeons.

Thoracic Surgery

Prof. Dr. S. Cafarotti, PD Dr. M. Patella et al.

We have completed the pilot project on lung cancer screening in Ticino. The study, the second in the whole of Switzerland after the experience of the University of Zurich, to which Dr. Patella had already contributed, involved four sites of the EOC Hospital with the participation of the OMCT and other professionals from AFFri and USI. The results of the study are to date under analysis and will be published soon. In another study recently accepted for publication, we looked at the social status of our patients undergoing lung surgery. Our collaboration with other national centers to develop cutting-edge strategies for the treatment of lung cancer, especially in advanced stages, continues. In addition, our collaboration with IOSI and other specialists at the Lung Cancer Center of Southern Switzerland has resulted in the development of three interesting projects dealing with the molecular characteristics of lung carcinomas and their clinical impact, small airway disease in surgical patients, and the construction of a national database on thymic neoplasms (head Dr. M. Imbimbo, IOSI). We are also entering the preclinical research scene for the first time with a project that we hope to develop in collaboration with state-of-the-art internal and external laboratories. Moreover, Prof. Cafarotti was involved in an editorial on Journal of Thoracic Oncology entitled “Lung Cancer in Switzerland” and was included in the international expert IASCL committee for the world 2024 lung cancer meeting.

Laboratory Research

[See chapter III on the Laboratories for Translational Research.](#)

Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics EOC

Prof. Andrea Papadia, MD, PhD
Head of Department

The current state of clinical research at the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics EOC involves a complex network of national and international academic research institutions, medical centers, and affiliated research study sites in several areas of research. Since its foundation in 2019, the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics has progressively implemented its scientific profile. In few years the output of peer-reviewed original manuscripts has increased dramatically to achieve an output with approximately 30 peer-reviewed manuscripts per year. Nowadays, the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics has several active trials. These include clinical and translational research lines.

Patients recruitment in prospective trials
Patients undergoing gynecological or breast cancer surgeries are regularly preoperatively screened for eligibility in clinical trials. In 2024, the accrual rate in prospective clinical trials of breast cancer patients rose to almost 60% (from 5% in 2020). A significant percentage of patients had the opportunity to participate into prospective clinical trials that in some cases gave them also the chance to receive an experimental treatment available only in the setting of the ongoing study. Nine percent of the recruited patients, joined more than one prospective study. Alongside, all the ovarian cancer patients meeting inclusion criteria for the active ongoing studies were invited in taking part in research and the majority of them was recruited. Also the majority of pregnant women who delivered in our Department, received the opportunity to

participate in one of the ongoing prospective trials active in oue Center.

Translational research lines
In cooperation with IOSI and IOR, the Ospedale Regionale di Lugano is collecting biological samples (tumor tissue, blood, ascites) of eligible breast and ovarian cancer patients in order to explore the immune signature of these specific cancer patients and to correlate it with prognosis, tumor features and response to chemotherapy. Similarly, rectal and vaginal swabs are preoperatively collected in order to correlate the oncological outcome with microbiota and immunological and inflammatory markers. In 2024, 22% of all breast cancer patients recruited in clinical trials, met the inclusion criteria for these research lines and almost all of them were involved in translational projects as well as almost all the advanced ovarian cancer patients who underwent primary cytoreduction or interval debulking surgery at the Ospedale Regionale di Lugano. For these research lines, not only oncological patients are involved. Indeed, cord blood of healthy pregnant women who deliver at the Regional Hospital of Lugano are regularly offered to donate their cord blood for research. The cord blood is collected immediatly after delivery and processed at the Cancer Immunotherapy lab of the IOR within 48 hours. The recruitment is under voluntary donation, following both vaginal deliveries and C-Sections, upon consent of the mother and father of the newborns. In 2024, cord blood samples from 104 women have been collected and regularly processed.

International Registries
In 2024, five international multicenter registries were active in breast cancer. One in reproductive medicine, one in benign gynecology and one in obstetrics. The recruitment was prospectively designed for most of them.

Field specific contributes
The gynecologic oncology network led by Prof. A. Papadia is characterized by the promotion of national and international studies in the field of sentinel lymph node mapping in endometrial and cervical cancer, where international databases are continuously updated from each adhering center. Prof. M.L. Gasparri as member of the Executive board and swiss EUBREAST Ambassador, is currently the promoter and/or national coordinator of more than 12 international studies in breast cancer field, most of which are endorsed also by the OPBC, UEMS, EUBREAST and SAKK. As Head of the national steering committee of most of them, she appointed one resident as local study coordinator for each study that she regularly mentors and introduces in the scientific panoramas of international trialists. PD Dr. A. Braga is involved in several retrospective multicenter analysis in the field of urogynecology providing a great scientific contribuete in this setting. Dr. A. Santi and Dr. C. Polli are acting as local PI for a study in the field of reproductive medicine and endometriosis, respectively.

Department of Anesthesiology, Emergency and Intensive Care Medicine EOC

Prof. Paolo Merlani, MD
Head of Department

The EOC is a multisite public hospital network providing care to patients in Southern Switzerland. The Department of Anesthesiology, Emergency and Intensive Care Medicine (ICU) of the EOC (DAEICM-EOC) is a functional Department. Each of the four public hospitals of the EOC network has his own DAEICM. The four local DAEICMs make up the DAEICM-EOC. A local Director heads each local DAEICM. The DAEICM-EOC coordinates and facilitates the integration and the collaboration among the four local DAEICMs for patients' care, for research purposes and for educational and training activities. Furthermore, the DAEICM-EOC is responsible for the didactic module "Critical Care" for the Master of Medicine of USI (<https://www.biomed.usi.ch/en>). Moreover, it supports medical students for their Master's thesis and their Medical Doctor thesis. In 2024, the DAEICM-EOC organized the second international "Acute Care Symposium of Southern Switzerland" (<https://eventi.eoc.ch/areacritica/>), and in October 2025, the third edition is already planned. In 2022 we first established an LRU for the entire DAEICM-EOC, headed by an attending physician of the Department and supported by a Steering Committee (<https://www.ctueoc.ch/lru-critical-care/>) The clinical activities of the ICU in Lugano

Hospital in conjunction with the presence of a local LRU recently enabled it to obtain the highest level of educational accreditation from the Swiss Society of Intensive Care Medicine. The main purpose of our LRU is to support researchers from study conception to manuscript submission in peer review journals, thanks the presence of methodological and statistical expertise, too. Each specialty and each hospital manage their own research projects as both monocentric and multicentric trials in collaboration with other Swiss and foreign research centers. One of the aims of the LRU of the DAEICM-EOC is to encourage and support common projects among the different specialties of the Department and especially regarding the transition of care (interdisciplinary and interprofessional projects).

Different topics are currently investigated by the DAEICM-EOC, and thereafter we mention the most relevant ones:

- Usefulness of Point of Care Ultrasound in different clinical settings
- Cost-effectiveness analysis for selected anesthesiological practices
- Perioperative transfusion's strategies and their economic impact during hospitalization

Click [here](#) to see the complete list of publications of the DAEICM-EOC

- Impact of different abdominal plane block in robotic and in non-robotic-assisted surgery
- Use of different analgesic regimen and procedures in the post-operative setting
- Treatment strategies (pharmacological and non-pharmacological) for chronic pain syndromes in outpatients
- Impact of virtual reality on preoperative fears
- Economic impact of 500 ml intravenous fluid containers elimination inside the DAEICM

Different projects are working in progress. Here a selection of the most promising: use of artificial intelligence and machine learning (ML) techniques for the early identification of nosocomial infections; impact of heatwaves on emergency department admission, assessment of inspiratory effort in intubated and mechanically ventilated patients by different measurement's techniques, early identification of ward's patients requiring ICU admission using ML, polypharmacology in the elderly emergency department patient, impact of blood-sparing device in the ICU.

Other EOC Services



Rehabilitation Clinic EOC (CREOC)

Nicola Schiavone, MD
Medical Director

CREOC takes care of rehabilitation of patients who need to improve the quality of their life. To reach this goal, clinicians apply the biopsychosocial model, approaching the recovery of biological factors (genetic, biochemical, etc.), psychological factors (mood, personality, behavior, etc.) and social factors (cultural, family, socioeconomic, etc.) of the person. Above all, rehabilitation goal is relieving pain, improving the movement of the limbs, recovering strength, improving breathing capacity, and general reconditioning of the person. CREOC, together with the Clinica Hildebrand, is part of REHA TICINO, the network to which Ticino Canton has entrusted the inpatient rehabilitation. In addition to inpatient rehabilitation, CREOC also offers rehabilitation services in any EOC hospital locations for all patients admitted to the hospitals themselves and for outpatient who require care. Inpatient rehabilitation services are offered in Faido and in Novaggio: both Clinica have a musculoskeletal, internal medicine-oncology and pneumology rehabilitation. Furthermore, for the care of more fragile and advanced age patients, CREOC has also developed a concept for taking care of geriatric patients. For years, the care of stationary patients has included various diagnostic-therapeutic-assistance (PDTA) rehabilitation pathways based on the main pathology. In particular, the following are taken care of:

In the musculoskeletal field:

- patients with spinal dysfunction;
- patients who have functional potential to be developed;

- patients with amputation;
- post-surgery patients (hip, knee, spine prostheses, etc.);
- orthopedic patients with neurological comorbidities;
- patients with pain syndrome.

In the internal-oncology field:

- internal medicine patients to be reconditioned;
- cancer patients to be reconditioned.

In the pneumological field:

- patients with respiratory problems;
- patients with SARS-CoV-2 to be reconditioned.

Specific working groups have been active for years on the standardization of therapeutic process, in order to create common working protocols based on medical evidence, both for what concerns PDTA and for what concerns specific areas such as re-education postural, pelvic floor rehabilitation, respiratory rehabilitation and, recently, the rehabilitation effects on Long COVID. In 2024, thanks to the support of the Nurse Direction, CREOC has presented several abstracts at the Illrd Innovation and Nursing Research Day on April 12th, 2024. At the 7th European Region Sigma Conference 2024 which has taken place in the United Kingdom, CREOC presented the study “Perceptions about specialized skills and educational needs of rehabilitation nurses: a mixed-methods study” (Schiavello, M., Penco, S., Levati, S.), winning the prize for the best oral presentaton delivered to

students. The European Region Sigma Conference is an international event and this year the main topic was focused on promoting global nursing assistance: learning, research and practice to satisfy healthcare and assistential needs of the future.



Nursing Research Centre EOC

Annette Biegger, MSc

Head of EOC Nursing Area

Loris Bonetti, PhD

Head of Nursing Research Division

In recent years, the EOC Nursing Area has promoted organisational and cultural improvements in order to advance the quality of care. This has led to changes in the organization and philosophy of care, as well as new technologies in support of nursing activities. In addition, great attention has been paid to the advancement of nurses' knowledge and skills, for which one of the most meaningful activities is the implementation of Advanced Practice Nurse roles. Given the increasing complexity of patients and health systems, these professional figures are crucial for the development of advanced nursing skills and clinical governance of professional activities. To support this process of change, investment has also been made by people with specific research training (PhD) and dedicated offices.

In the medical field, knowledge rapidly evolves, and something that is effective yesterday may no longer be effective today. Hence, it is important to develop research studies focused on the nursing field to provide nurses with new evidence and develop new expertise. Polit and Beck (2006) defined nursing research as a "systematic inquiry designed to develop knowledge about issues of importance to nurses, including nursing practice, nursing education, and nursing administration".

Nursing research activities with dedicated resources were first registered at IOSI in 2010 and are documented annually in the EOC Annual Scientific Report and EOC Nursing Activity bi-annual Report. In September 2016, the Centre of Competence for Nursing Research (CcRI) was established within the

EOC Nursing Division with the following mission: "... to promote the development and quality of nursing care in response to the health needs of the population, promoting innovation and nursing research in all clinical realities of the EOC and maintaining a close link between research (theory) and nursing care (practice)".

In the coming years, the plan is to expand the network of colleagues and/or nursing research offices within EOC sites. Today, research offices are active across different sites, including IOSI, ORBV, ICCT, and ORL. Currently, each of these hospitals/institutes has at least one nurse dedicated to nursing research. Currently, the Leads of the local nursing research units are: Angela Tolotti at the IOSI, Sarah Jayne Liptrott at the ORBV in Bellinzona, Luca Corina Elena at the ORL, and Michele Villa at the ICCT. Nuria Prieto Casais joined the research team at IOSI in December, 2022. The Chief of the CcRI is Loris Bonetti since September 2021. Laura Steiner also works as nurse researcher at the CcRI. Nurses active in research are part of the Nurse Led Research Coordinating Team (CooRI), which coordinates EOC research activities and research development plans in the nursing field. In hospitals/institutions where there is no nurse dedicated to nursing research, Loris Bonetti and Laura Steiner help local nursing clinical experts in the development of research. The CooRI has recently been formally recognized as a Local Research Unit.

The following are the main activities for which CcRI and CooRI are responsible:

- To develop, in accordance with the vision and the mission of the Nursing

Department, the strategic development of nursing research and nursing profession at the EOC.

- Developing training courses on research topics to be offered to all EOC nurses. This is critical for creating essential synergies with clinical realities and the network of nurses within the EOC.
- To promote and support cultural and scientific production by colleagues (preparation of abstracts, posters, journal articles, and research projects). etc.).
- To collaborate with colleagues with managerial roles and colleagues from clinical governance for the collection and/or critical analysis of data, dissemination of evidence, and development of internal guidelines.
- To develop and implement nursing research projects using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods.
- Develop and maintain collaborations with national and international nursing research associations and networks.

Research questions usually arise from needs identified by nurses working in clinical practice or holding managerial roles, and are answered through studies, which can be carried out with internal or external resources and funding. Internal resources are mainly used to conduct 'action-research' studies-planned and developed together with nurses involved in clinical practice and in the context of interest, aimed to explore a specific clinical or professional phenomenon in order to change and improve nursing practice. Such studies are 'context-related'; therefore, results can be transferred to similar realities but usually cannot be generalized. Despite this, such action research studies are deemed important, as they require a proactive role from professional teams and stimulate reflective thinking and critical review of their professional practice. Other studies, especially those externally funded, tend to focus on the phenomena of clinical or professional interest of a more general nature.

The following are the research studies that are currently active:

- A pilot project to test a complex intervention delivered by oncology nurses aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle among cancer patients. The intervention

- was based on patient engagement theory. This study will be conducted in partnership with The Catholic University of Milan. It has recently been funded by Fond'action contre le cancer (Lausanne).
- Three studies on the implementation of the Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) role in stroke patients, patients undergoing peritoneal dialysis, and in palliative care.
- An investigation of a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program in ORBV, which was open to participants from all professional categories. This study explored the effect of the program on mindfulness practices, stress, and psychological well-being.
- Development of a complex intervention to promote positive workplaces: An implementation study.
- Adaptation of the Ethical Conflict Nursing Questionnaire-Critical Care to Acute and Chronic Care Contexts: A Delphi Study.
- A non-inferiority randomized controlled trial, open and controlled in parallel group, on safety and benefits of mobilization at 4 h compared to 24 h after implantation of an intracardiac electronic device.
- An observational study on the frequency and predictors of haemodynamic instability during automated changeover of norepinephrine infusion pumps.
- A prospective observational study about active involvement of patients with cancer in clinical research, with the aim to educate patients in order to be directly involved in the performance/discussion/design of clinical studies.
- In collaboration with EOC midwives, a mixed-method study to understand the experiences of women who gave birth at the EOC.
- An implementation-effectiveness study investigating the introduction of a new nursing handoff approach.
- Development and testing of a complex intervention to optimise older adults' transitions from hospital to home Optimising oldEr adults' tRansitions: A multidimeNsional approach to Discharge planning in Southern Swtitzerland – OPERANDI project. The project is part of the joint doctoral programme between Maastricht University, Bern University of Applied Sciences and the Medical University of Graz.

- A study regarding the Self-Evaluation of health professionals' clinical competencies' skills in ORBV, IOSI e IPSI.

Other studies are planned in collaboration with colleagues working in various clinical settings.

Two members of the CooRI are also involved in a strategic project of the nursing department for the development of the EOC Nursing Professional Practice Model (PPM) and the creation of a new model of nursing care at EOC. Both projects have concluded the preliminary steps, and now we are starting the implementation phase, in which the CcRI and CooRI will have an important and strategic role.

In February 2024, the results of the CooRI studies about the Covid pandemic were presented in a public event, in which the patients and caregivers who were involved in the studies were personally invited. It has been an important and emotional moment, which highlighted the important role nurses played during the pandemic, and in which the patients and their families shared their gratitude for what nurses did.

In June 2025 three abstracts of different research projects performed by CooRI and the nursing department will be presented during the 30th International Council of Nurses (ICN) congress: “Nursing Power to Change the World” in Helsinki, Finland, one of the most important nursing conferences worldwide. This is an important success, because the ICN congress is highly competitive.

On the 12th of April 2024 the third EOC Nursing Research Congress was held in Lugano in collaboration with the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI). More than 170 EOC nurses participated to the conference and 50 abstracts from EOC nurses were submitted, meaning that nursing research is constantly growing in our context.

The topics of this conference edition were fundamentals of care and nursing retention. For this reason, we invited keynote speakers Prof. Loredana Sasso, a renowned researcher and Chief of the Nursing Doctoral Program at the University of Genoa, who shared with us her experience about the fundamentals of care, and Prof. Annie Oulevey Bachmann, from the Institut et Haute Ecole de la Santé

La Source, an expert in nursing retention. Both keynote speakers' contributions were appreciated by the participants and stimulated a great debate during and after the conference.

In addition, the 13th Conference of Medical Human Research in September has seen also this year the significant participation of many EOC nurses. As in the previous edition, two parallel sections were dedicated to nursing research projects. Moreover, one of the nursing EOC projects presented during the plenary session was awarded the best oral nursing presentation.

In 2024, the Convention between the EOC Competence Centre for Nursing Research and SUPSI Competence Centre for Health Practices and Policies became more operational. In fact, in collaboration with SUPSI, we are conducting a scoping review to summarize what is reported in the literature on the use of virtual reality in promoting well-being among health students and health professionals. Based on the results of the scoping review, we would like to conduct a joint study on this topic, to be presented at a competitive national grant. This is the first real research project in collaboration with these two institutions. As in 2023, in December 2024, a meeting was organized with EOC and SUPSI nursing researchers, in which the two institutions reflected on the many changes characterizing the current health system to start thinking about possible future joint research projects. Finally, the project EOC-SUPSI about the implementation of the Advanced Practice Nurse in palliative care has been funded by the “Fondation Recherche suisse contre le cancer”. This important achievement underlines how collaboration between the clinical and academic fields can be strategic for the development of nursing research and the nursing profession at the EOC and in the Ticino context.

Information and Communications Technology Area (ICT) EOC

Marco Bosetti

Head of EOC Information and Communications Technology Area

The “Information and Communications Technology area” (ICT) is the IT department of EOC. With more than 100 employees, it covers the traditional IT services like infrastructure, operations and support. Moreover, it implemented in-house and maintains the Geco that is the clinical information system of EOC since 2007. For this reason, the ICT has extensive experience in integration and analysis of clinical records.

The ICT is actively involved in research activities mainly through his dedicated team named “Innovation and Research”, which is deeply focused on advancing Artificial Intelligence (AI). Besides internal resources, the ICT strategic development foresees the establishment of collaborations with external organizations like, e.g., the Swiss AI Lab (USI-SUPSI IDSIA) aiming at applying cutting edge AI techniques on EOC data and the Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN) to enable nationwide use and exchange of health data for research. The ICT serves as the central hub for the extraction and analysis of clinical data, supporting researchers, students, scientific publications, and the preparation of funding proposals. Its scientific output continues to grow steadily, driven by productive collaborations with clinical partners.

The portfolio of active funded AI projects encompasses various initiatives, including the identification of adverse drug reactions within clinical documentation (SNF), the automation of discharge letter drafting using LLMs (Innosuisse), the de-identification of clinical text to ensure privacy (SNF), and the processing of clinical text to monitor eligibility for clinical research (SNF). The ICT is also engaged in internal projects focused on improving hospital management, such as implementing an AI-driven dashboard to optimize length-of-stay management. Furthermore, the ICT evaluates and promotes the acquisition of third-party innovative solutions (e.g. Q&A on hospital corporate documentation using Retrieval Augmented Generation and LLM). Finally, the suite of research software/ infrastructure solutions developed and maintained by ICT includes an electronic case report forms to manage clinical trials (5dBase - validated FDA cfr 21 part 11), an event driven direct data entry database to manage both biobanks and surveys (eddie - validated FDA cfr 21 part 11) and a clinical data warehouse.

Medical Education and Research Area of the General Directorate EOC



Prof. Alessandro Ceschi, MD, MSc
Head of AFRi Area

The Medical Education and Research Area (AFRi) is part of the General Directorate of EOC. The AFRi places medical training and research at the core of its activities, recognizing them as the foundations for the development and advancement of knowledge and innovation in medicine and for the improvement of patient care. AFRi actively promotes and supports research within the EOC hospitals facilitating translational and clinical research across a broad spectrum of medical fields. Its activities are diverse and primarily aim to

- **Support researchers:** providing assistance and resources for the implementation and conduct of research projects. This includes, for examples, access to research infrastructures, assistance with grant applications, methodological guidance and statistical expertise.
- **Foster Collaboration:** AFRi actively cultivates partnerships with national and international research institutions, universities, and industry stakeholders. These collaborations foster the exchange of expertise, resources, and ideas, thereby enriching the quality and broadening the impact of the research conducted within the EOC.
- **Promote Innovation:** AFRi encourages the exploration of novel ideas and the development of innovative solutions to address unmet clinical needs.

Laboratories for Translational Research (LRT) of EOC

Prof. Alain Kaelin, MD PhD
Director

Laboratories for Translational Research at the Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale (LRT-EOC) serve as a key asset to both EOC and the Faculty of Biomedicine at Università Svizzera italiana, balancing roles in research and direct patient care while harnessing the network’s full synergy. Currently, our active research groups are tackling some of the most pressing medical challenges facing our aging population, including cardiovascular and chronic kidney diseases, neurodegenerative disorders, regenerative medicine, colon cancer. As part of the BIOS+ scientific community, we promote the exchange of data and know-how with national and international research teams. Beyond pioneering translational research projects, the LRT-EOC is deeply committed to education, hosting PhD candidates and Master’s students from various national and international universities. This powerful synergy of research, education, and clinical practice is positioning the LRT-EOC at the forefront of transforming public hospitals in Ticino into university hospitals—a strategic advancement for healthcare and academic training in our Canton.

Active Labs in 2024:

Regenerative Medicine Technologies Research Group
PI Prof. M. Moretti

The Regenerative Medicine Technologies Lab integrates engineering, biology, and medicine to create advanced in vitro tissue substitutes using biofabrication and microfluidic technologies. It develops

3D musculoskeletal in vitro models—from microfluidic devices to clinically relevant models—replicating the complex architecture and mechanical properties of native tissues. These platforms are designed for high-throughput drug screening and personalized therapy testing, targeting applications such as bone tumors, osteoarthritis, and muscle fibrosis. Moreover, these in vitro high throughput platforms are leveraged for studies regarding the ageing of blood vessels, within the Vascular Aging group led by prof. Simone Bersini, senior research associate in the lab and recipient of an ERC grant. Our models show improved predictivity as compared to standard in vitro models, better reproducing the effects of known anti-tumor drugs on cancer cells. We are also working on improving the mechanical properties of the models, leveraging bioprinting techniques. As a further research field, the lab is involved in the translation of bioprinting and 3D cell culture techniques for space biology experiments, in collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA).

Laboratory for Cardiovascular Theranostics
PI Prof. L. Barile

The LCT laboratory is active in exploring the role of senescence in cardiovascular diseases through both in vitro and in vivo models. In vitro, they have developed a premature senescence model in human cardiomyocytes using induced pluripotent

stem cell technology, providing a unique platform to study cellular mechanisms behind senescence-associated cardiac diseases. In vivo, they investigate stress-induced senescence in animal models of myocardial infarction, where senescent cells contribute to fibrosis and necrosis, exacerbating cardiac damage. Their research explores potential senolytic and senostatic therapies to mitigate these effects. Additionally, the laboratory studies extracellular vesicles (EVs) as diagnostic biomarkers and mediators of inflammation. They have performed molecular analysis on plasma- and serum-derived EVs, leading to the development of diagnostic tests for acute cardiac rejection post-heart transplantation and for assessing risk of cardiovascular severe events.

Laboratory for Neurodegenerative Diseases

PI Prof. G. Melli

Parkinson’s disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder marked by the accumulation of aggregated α -Syn protein, with no clear early diagnostic criteria or causal treatment. Recent findings indicate that peripheral tissues—such as skin, gastrointestinal mucosa, and salivary glands—exhibit immunoreactivity to pathogenic α -Syn forms, making them accessible targets for novel biomarkers. Melli’s laboratory leverages skin biopsies and peripheral fluids to detect and characterize α -Syn species, and has demonstrated a correlation between somatosensory small fiber neuropathy and disease progression. These efforts, supported by an extensive biobank and clinical database established at NSI in Lugano, aim to elucidate the interplay between peripheral inflammation, immune dysregulation, and neuronal cell death in PD.

Surgical Research Group

PI Prof. G. Iezzi

Iezzi’s group investigates the relationship between gut microbiota and the immune system in diseases such as colorectal cancer and obesity. Lab research focuses

on identifying biomarkers for treatment responses, determining high-risk patients for recurrence, and developing therapeutic approaches using probiotics or antibiotics. The Surgical Research Group found that certain gut bacteria can influence cancer progression, with some bacteria promoting antitumor effects and others like *Fusobacterium nucleatum* linked to poor chemotherapy outcomes. Their recent work also explores microbiota’s role in bariatric surgery effectiveness and immune responses in COVID-19 patients.

Nephrology Research Group

PI Prof. P. Cippà

The function of the kidney depends on the precise organization and coordination of more than 30 cell types, forming the functional units called nephrons. A variety of clinical conditions, such as diabetes, drug toxicity, and autoimmune diseases, can damage kidney cells and alter the balance necessary for the organ to properly function. Since the kidney loses the ability to generate new nephrons after birth, the maintenance of renal function after kidney injury depends on the compensatory adaptation of the remaining nephrons, and the ability of the kidney to repair damaged nephrons. Unfortunately, this process is often incomplete and can result in the persistence of altered cells and a dysfunctional tissue architecture, which contribute to the progression of renal disease towards renal failure. In this stage the kidney damage is irreversible, and the patient rely on dialysis or kidney transplant to survive. Our research aims to characterize and better understand the biological processes of kidney repair. The goal is to support functional tissue regeneration processes and prevent the progression to chronic kidney disease.

Aging Disorders

PI Prof. P. Paganetti

The research activity of the Laboratory for Aging Disorders, is focused on the tau protein, which plays a key role in Alzheimer's disease when it undergoes alterations. One line of study investigates the cellular

mechanisms that drive the progression of this pathology, leading to the deterioration of patients' cognitive abilities. It has long been known that a diseased neuron can develop deposits of altered tau protein (neurofibrillary tangles) within itself and can then "export" these tangles to neighboring healthy cells. In these cells, new pathological tau protein forms, triggering a chain reaction that spreads further and ultimately leads to the destruction of neurons. Paganetti's team has investigated these mechanisms and the biological events that occur within neurons when they take in pathological tau protein. Their research revealed that the entry of tau is facilitated by the malfunctioning of a cellular organelle called the lysosome.

[Click here for detailed information on the research activities of LRT-EOC.](#)

Clinical Trial Unit EOC

Prof. Anastasios Stathis, MD
Scientific Head
Tatiana Terrot
Head of Operations

The CTU-EOC is a unit of AFRi, and is a full member of the Swiss Clinical Trial Organization (SCTO). The mission of the CTU-EOC is to support and advance academic clinical research within the EOC by providing high-quality assistance for the implementation and conduct of research projects in all fields of medicine, ensuring compliance with national and international regulatory requirements. Experienced collaborators enable to support multicenter research projects, thus ensuring quality and enhancing both robustness and execution speed. The CTU-EOC offers support throughout the research process, from protocol drafting- including study design definition- to submission to regulatory authorities, as well as data management by providing the necessary infrastructure for data collection in compliance with current regulations and data analysis upon study completion. The CTU-EOC has extensive expertise in the managing of multicenter studies, particularly those involving early-stage drug development, conducted in Switzerland and across Europe. In addition to project coordination, it also supports product management and safety monitoring.

During 2024, the CTU-EOC was involved in 166 projects, 74 of which were initiated during that year. Of these, 34 fell under HRO Chapter 3 (further user), 13 under HRO Chapter 2, 6 under ClinO_other, 8 under ClinO-IMP and 5 under ClinO-MD, while 8 projects belonged to other categories (Figure 1).

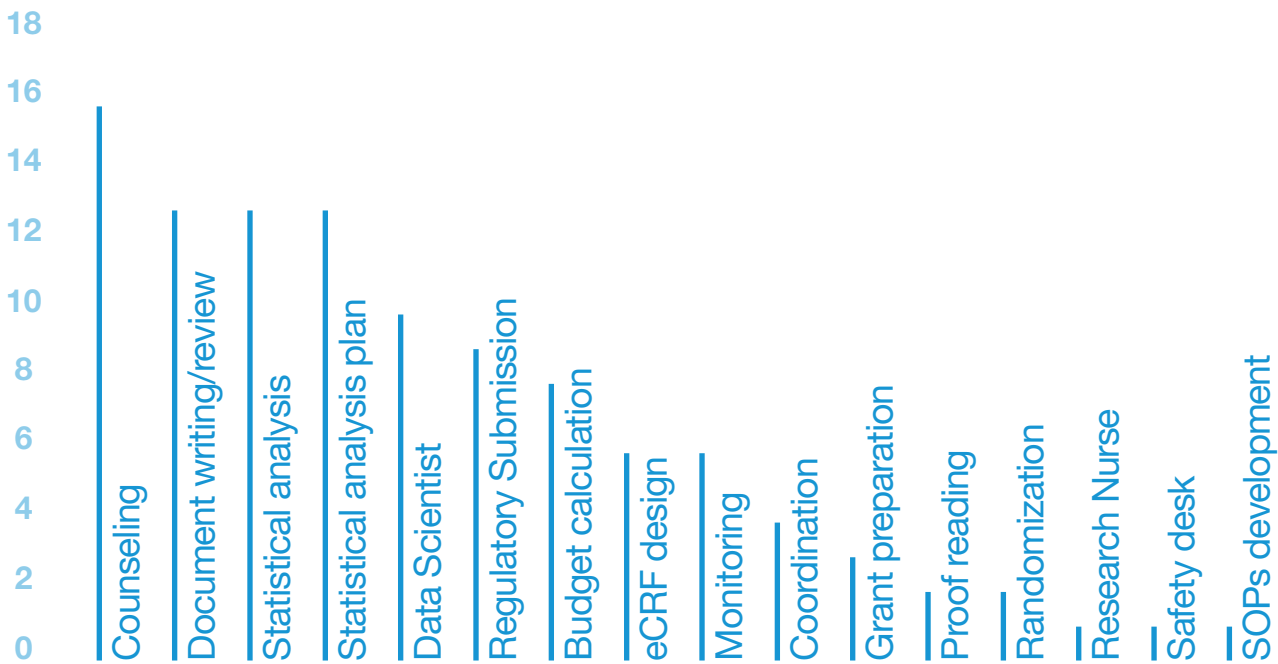


Figure 1.
Services requested
during 2024

In 2024, CTU-EOC began evaluating its technological infrastructures, reassessing essential tools (e.g., eCRF) in light of new regulatory guidelines and strengthening all processes related to data governance. This was driven by the increasing use of artificial intelligence alongside traditional clinical trial management approaches.

Moreover, CTU-EOC continues to enhance internal collaborations with EOC institutes and departments, as well as with external research groups such as the IOR, IRB and the Cantonal Sociopsychiatric Organization.

Requests for support received in 2024 primarily involved projects led by researchers in neurology, oncology, gynecology and internal medicine (Figure 2).

In addition to providing the full range of skills needed to conduct a research project,

the CTU-EOC also provides support to students, particularly from the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences at USI, who need to conduct their master's or doctoral theses.

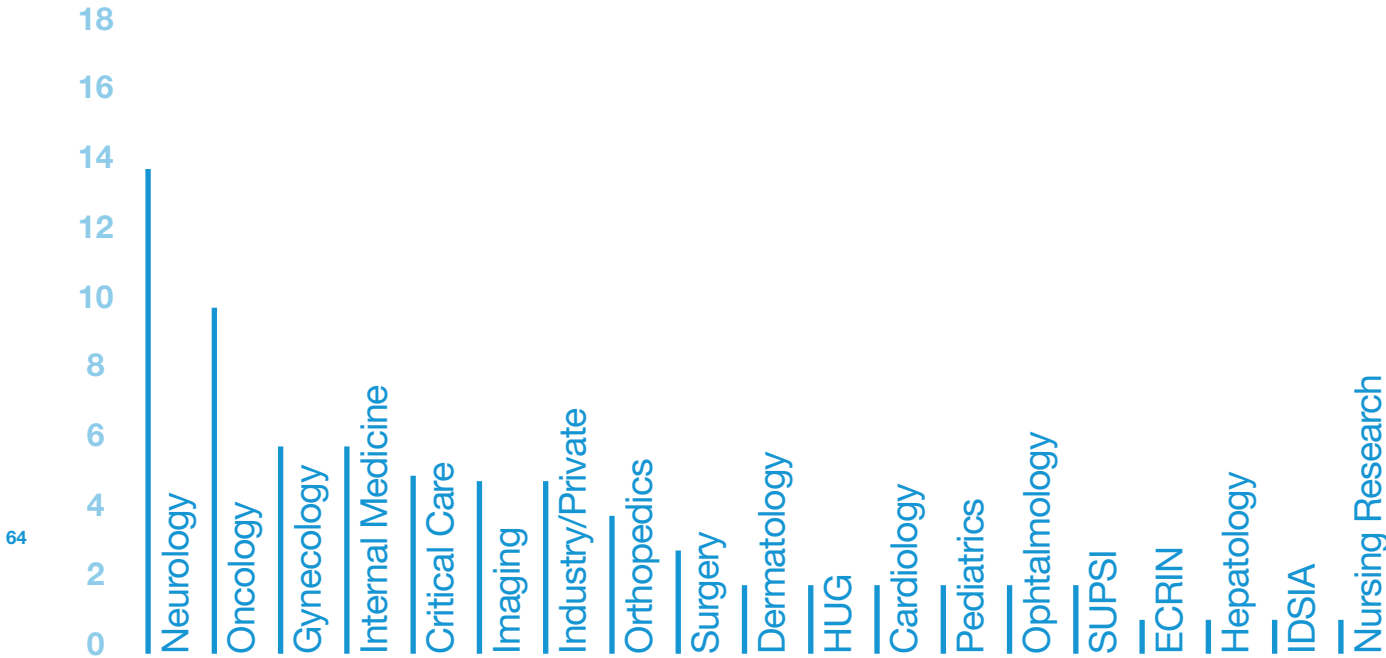


Figure 2.
Collaboration within EOC and with external Institutes during 2024

Education

CTU-EOC's educational program aims to contribute to the training and development of researchers by offering dynamic and high-quality courses. The program is flexible to meet the needs and requirements of researchers at EOC and partner institutions. During 2024, nine courses were delivered, with a total of 103 participants, who provided positive feedback. Participants included

both internal EOC employees and external researchers. CTU-EOC continues to offer courses as part of the PhD programs of the USI Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, which are also open to PhD students from partner institutions such as ETHZ and UZH. The CTU-EOC actively contributes to the SCTO education platform, as well as other platforms, ensuring continuous exchange and up-to-date knowledge in this field.

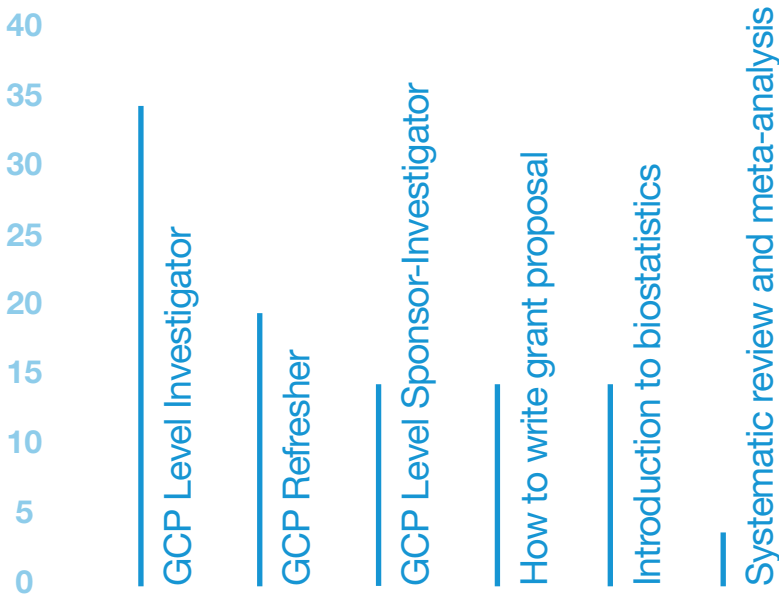


Figure 3.
Courses and number of participants

Events

AFRi and the CTU-EOC, in collaboration with the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences at USI, organized the 13th “Giornata della Ricerca e dell’Innovazione in Medicina Umana della Svizzera italiana”. Attendance has been steadily increasing both in terms of the number of abstracts submitted

across each research category (54 basic-translational or computational, 44 clinical or epidemiological, 20 nursing) and in the number of participants (308).

More information is available at the following link: <https://www.ctueoc.ch/giornata-della-ricerca/>



Grants and Fundraising Unit

In 2024, our efforts focused on strengthening our role within the national research landscape through a series of strategic actions:

- Enhancing our participation in projects funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).
- Consolidating strategic partnerships with local research groups, fostering synergies that drive innovation.
- Fostering a new culture of competitive funding by promoting a proactive approach among researchers, encouraging them to identify and pursue grant opportunities to support and grow their research activities.

We developed operational processes to support the management of research collaborations and enhance grant efficiency and accountability, ensuring transparent reporting of the grants received. We also contributed to defining key aspects of internal fund management related to research grants, helping ensure effective and compliant use of resources.

We actively promoted collaborations and partnerships aimed at building strong relationships with other research institutions, further strengthening our network and collective research potential. We thank our founders, stakeholders, and committed partners for their continued trust and support in advancing our research initiatives. Their collaboration remains essential to driving meaningful progress in clinical research and delivering tangible benefits to patients and their families. To learn more about how we manage grants and private third-party funding at EOC, please reach out to the Grants and Fundraising Unit.

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EOC Biobank

The EOC Biobank is a non-profit service available to researchers for the collection, processing, storage and distribution of biological samples and associated (clinical) data for research purposes. It is recognized by the Swiss Biobanking Platform with the “Norma label” and applies all regulatory and quality requirements aimed at guaranteeing donors' rights. In 2024, the EOC Biobank continued to manage biological samples for clinical studies, mainly promoted by researchers from EOC. Currently, 17 collections of biological samples obtained from blood are being managed, with over 44,000 aliquots stored at the facility. Some of these collections have completed the collection phase and are continuing with long-term storage. Collaborations with other research Institutes have also begun and samples stored at the EOC Biobank have been made available to researchers outside Switzerland. The purpose of a biobank is not only to store biological material but also to make it available to the scientific community. The EOC Biobank is accessible not only to EOC researchers but to all research groups interested in benefitting from a highly qualified infrastructure dedicated to the collection, storage and use of biological samples in Ticino, as well as nationally and internationally.

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Intellectual property

Intellectual property (IP) and related rights establish legal framework to protect creative and inventive works from unauthorized commercial use and reproduction. The primary value of IP is commercial. EOC is committed to fostering scientific knowledge and maximizing the impact of its research findings. This includes facilitating technology transfer from the intellectual creations of EOC researchers. Any invention or innovation that could be patented (or similarly protected) and is eligible for exclusive rights, falls under [the EOC regulation on intellectual property](#). The EOC Intellectual Property

Commission (IP Commission) oversees the implementation of this regulation. This commission comprises members from the EOC General Directorate. The USI Technology Transfer Manager is also a member and supports its operations. The IP Commission is responsible for protecting and leveraging inventions that are, or could be, patentable or otherwise legally protected. The IP Commission convenes as needed whenever a request for the patentability of an invention or any other intellectual property arises.

General consent for research purposes

In 2021 the AFRi initiated the implementation of the General Consent for research purposes across EOC Institutes and Departments. This initiative was pivotal as a large part of medical research relies heavily on patients' personal health data documented in their medical records, such as laboratory results, administered treatments and genetic predispositions. Similarly, biological material collected in hospitals during patient care that is no longer clinically required holds immense value for research.

The General Consent empowers patients to directly contribute to advancing medical knowledge. Patients can now actively contribute and provide their explicit consent for their clinical data and/or leftover biological samples to be securely stored, potentially shared with third-party research institutions and subsequently reused for research purposes. Crucially, such re-use remains subject to the approval by the competent Ethics Committee(s). Through the introduction of the General Consent for research purposes across EOC hospitals, patients are now informed of the great value of their personal health data and biological material and how they can contribute to and fuel future research discoveries.

Between 2021 and 2024, the EOC collected 56'695 General Consent forms. Of these, 5'546 patients actively refuse the re-use of clinical data and/or biological samples for research purposes.

The EOC is also participating in a national multicenter project titled "REPRESENT Switzerland: REPresentativeness of RESearch data obtained through the SwissGeneral Informed ConsENT". This project aims to thoroughly describe the demographic and clinical characteristics of patients across Switzerland who consent, refuse or do not respond to the re-use of their clinical data or leftover biological material for research. REPRESENT seeks to establish an infrastructure that will improve the application of the General Consent in Switzerland, thereby avoiding the underrepresentation of specific populations in clinical research

For more information:

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USI Faculties and Institutes

Research activities in biomedical sciences at USI are mostly organized within the Institutes of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, but also comprise more interdisciplinary activities in domains of computational sciences, health economics, and health communication in cooperation with the Faculties of Informatics, Economics, and Communication, Culture and Society.



USI Faculty of Biomedical Science

USI Faculty of Biomedical Sciences was established in 2014 with the aim of addressing an important national problem: the dearth of physicians trained in Switzerland. To reach its goal, the Faculty offers from 2020 a Master of Medicine (three years of clinical training), in cooperation with ETH Zurich, University of Basel and University of Bern regarding academics, and with EOC, clinics, and general practitioners regarding clinical training. The Master addresses the new challenges of medical practice by combining clinical and scientific training with communication skills. The Faculty is also offering a joint Master's programme in Cognitive Psychology in Health Communication with Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan. The Faculty is offering a PhD program in Biomedical Sciences with majors corresponding to its main research areas, i.e. immunology and cell biology, cancer biology and oncology, (human) neurosciences, (human) cardiovascular sciences, drug sciences, public health, computational biomedicine and musculoskeletal sciences and regenerative medicine, as well as a Medical Doctor Programme (MD-PhD). Moreover, the Faculty organizes an Executive Programme in Sleep Medicine (with the University of Bern), in Gastrointestinal, Gynecological and Prostate Cancer (with the European School of Oncology) and in Patient's Communication (with Fondazione Sasso Corbaro). Finally, the Center of Advanced Studies on Entrepreneurship in Biomedicine

(CASE BioMed) adds to the medical and scientific education at the Faculty by offering advanced programmes in innovation and entrepreneurship. The Faculty currently comprises more than 20 full, associate and assistant professors, as well as a large number of adjunct professors, and of private lecturers; these mostly include directors and senior scientific staff of the EOC presented in Chapter I of this report.

Research in the Faculty is developed in immunology and basic cancer research at the two affiliated institutes IRB and IOR and in the transnational research laboratories of EOC, epidemiological and clinical research is performed within the Institute of Public Health at USI and in the institutes and centers at EOC (see Chapter I of this report); finally, research in computational biomedicine is developed at the Euler Institute:

- The Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB; www.irb.usi.ch), affiliated and based in the Bellinzona campus. IRB was founded in 2000 with the goal of advancing the study of human immunology, with particular emphasis on the disease-relevant mechanisms of host defense. Since 2010, it is affiliated to USI as part of its Faculty of Biomedical Sciences. It currently comprises 13 research groups about 125 international collaborators.
- The Institute of Oncology Research (IOR; www.ior.usi.ch), affiliated and based in

the Bellinzona campus, hosts researchers from all over the world performing basic and translational research in oncology with special focus on cancer biology, genomics, molecular oncology, experimental therapeutics. Since 2017, IOR is affiliated to USI as part of its Faculty of Biomedical Sciences. The Institute currently comprises 8 research groups and about 70 researchers and PhD students.

- The Institute of Public Health (IPH), see below.
- The Institute of Family Medicine (IMF), see below.
- The Euler Institute (www.euler.usi.ch), common to the Faculties of Informatics and Economics. Euler is USI's central node for interdisciplinary research and the connection between exact sciences and life sciences. Euler applies advanced computational methods to fields such as Life Sciences, Medicine, Physics, Mathematics, and Quantitative Methods. It currently comprises four professors, as well as several adjunct professors and groups leaders and about 45 researchers and PhD students.

Institute of Public Health (IPH)

The [Institute of Public Health \(IPH\)](#) is an inter-faculty Institute and one of the five training and research entities supported by the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences of the Università della Svizzera italiana. Members of the IPH perform research, training and practice, and provide services across a broad range of activities related to public health. The IPH is the ‘antenna’ in Ticino of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) and is home to research programs articulated across several research projects. In addition, IPH members provide support and scientific advice on the methodology of epidemiological, biomedical, behavioral, and other areas of research, from the conception, to the conduction, through the implementation of studies with various designs and spanning qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. IPH is an USI inter-faculty Institute with members from the Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society, the Faculty of Economics, and of Biomedical sciences.

The IPH staff currently includes the Director (Prof. Dr Med Emiliano Albanese), 3 tenured professors, 1 adjunct professor, 5 post-doctoral fellows, including 2 MER, and several PhD students and research assistants. The members of the IPH have a broad range of backgrounds, interests, competencies, and varied experiences across research domains that span the medical field, epidemiology, health economics, health communication, health

promotion and behavior, psychology, among others. Members of the IPH conduct a variety of studies in the fields of aging, mental health, epidemiology, public health, cognitive development and decline, social media addiction, digital health and digital public health, scientific dissemination, clinical psychology, activity, vaccine acceptance, and social integration. Study designs include epidemiological, population-based studies, experimental studies, qualitative studies (interviews and focus groups), media content analyses, systematic reviews, meta-analyses. Target populations include older adults (>65), younger adults (18-35), children and adolescents (>18), caregivers, and healthcare providers.

Researchers at the IPH have strong collaborations at the local (e.g. Canton of Ticino, ProSenectute Ticino e Moesano, Alzheimer Ticino, SUPSI), national (all Swiss universities, ETHZ, and EPFL) and international level (University of Verona, University of Vienna, and University of Milan, as well as with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, SDC, and many NGOs based in Switzerland and abroad. Members of the IPH give courses in various USI Bachelor’s degrees, and within the USI Master in Medicine, the Master in Communication, and the Master in Cognitive Psychology in Health Communication. Other graduate trainings include the SSPH+ Inter Graduate Campus, and the USI Net Megs executive master program.

The IPH is committed to promote the highest ethical and methodological standards in population sciences and embraces a strong participatory action research approach and community engagement of the public and of relevant stakeholders. Both research and training at the IPH ultimately aim to improve public health, to inform policy decisions and practices, and to contribute to positively influence individual behaviors and societal practices that promote and protect health, prevent diseases, and favor optimal and equitable care based on needs.

Institute of Family Medicine (IMF)

The Institute of Family Medicine (IMF), supported by the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, works to strengthen the role of family doctors. The IMF collaborates with the Ordine dei Medici del Canton Ticino (OMCT), the Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale (EOC), the Department of Health and Social Affairs (DSS), and the Istituti Sociali of Lugano (LIS).

The objectives and tasks of the IMF, in line with its academic mission, include basic and continuing education, research, and community service. These are achieved through the establishment, strengthening, and coordination of network activities and treatment pathways, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.

The family doctor is responsible for ensuring adequate and continuous care, maintaining consistency across various diagnostic and therapeutic interventions, and collaborating with interprofessional care teams.

The ISFM specialization for the physician performing this role can be in general internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, or other fields, as long as continuous and holistic care is provided in line with the WONCA model. This model includes a holistic approach, person-centered care, community orientation, primary care focus, comprehensive approach, and problem-solving in complex contexts.

In summary, the family doctor is often considered the "personal doctor," meaning both one's own doctor and the doctor for the person as a whole.

The objectives of the IMF are as follows

- Enhance the image of the family doctor by emphasizing their role as a specialist (currently, there is no in-depth training in general internal medicine specifically dedicated to family medicine). The family doctor ensures the adequacy, quality, and continuity of care. These are essential functions and values that need to be promoted and recognized.
- Increase attractiveness of family medicine
- Reorient training: general internal medicine training has traditionally been focused on hospital medicine, and there is a need to refocus on specific family medicine topics.
- Address the needs of the population: both the population and the health system would benefit from a new family medicine identity and targeted training.
- Innovate: the project is unique and innovative.

The Institute of family medicine (IMF) promotes clinical research in areas specific to family medicine with a focus on:

- Adequacy of care
- Over- and under-medicalisation
- Communication and health
- Culture and health
- Clinical ethics
- Health psychology
- Telemedicine in primary care
- New models of integrated care

The IMF staff currently includes the Director (Prof. Dr med Luca Gabutti), 3 family doctor, 1 senior consultant and some post-doc.

Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society

The Faculty of Communication, Culture, and Society offers extensive expertise in diverse health-related domains, including health communication, patient safety, health behavior, and literacy. The faculty offers a Master of Science program in Health Communication and has three full time, tenured Professors dedicated to health and health communication (Hannawa, Schulz, and Suggs).

“BeCHANGE” Research Group

Under the leadership of Prof. Suggs, the BECHANGE research group identifies determinants of health-related behaviors and develops effective strategies for behavior change. Located at the faculty's Institute of Communication and Public Policy (ICPP), the team specifically investigates methods for making healthy behaviors “easier” to adopt, for communicating complex health messages, and for enhancing vaccine acceptance and uptake through improved public and healthcare provider communication.

Web: <https://www.icpp.usi.ch/en/research/social-marketing>

“CAHQS” Center for the Advancement of Healthcare Quality & Safety

Established in 2016, the CAHQS is an international competence center dedicated to advancing healthcare quality and safety through applied communication science and interdisciplinary collaboration. Directed by Prof. Hannawa, CAHQS bridges the gap between social sciences and healthcare

practice, emphasizing communication as a critical determinant of patient safety outcomes.

Communication plays a pivotal role in various healthcare contexts — from sensitive provider-patient interactions and interprofessional teamwork to effective cooperation with caregivers and among healthcare institutions. Recognizing this, CAHQS employs evidence-based research to identify, analyze, and enhance communication practices, transforming critical points of interaction into resilient processes. This approach aims to fortify healthcare systems, minimize risks, and prevent avoidable harm.

The CAHQS team promotes interdisciplinary collaboration among experts from diverse fields, including communication science, medicine, nursing, psychology, and health policy. Its innovative, evidence-based solutions address major healthcare challenges, ensuring that research outcomes are directly applicable and actionable within real-world healthcare environments to continually elevate standards of quality and safety.

The CAHQS focuses on four critical areas, emphasizing communication as not merely supportive but essential to healthcare quality and safety:

1. Quality Care

Every healthcare interaction — be it within teams, between providers and patients, or across care institutions — represents an opportunity for communication to enhance or undermine the quality of

care. CAHQS explores evidence-based communication practices that improve care coordination in resource-efficient ways while ensuring safe and patient-centered care.

2. Medication Safety

Medication errors frequently result from communication failures in prescribing or dispensing medications or in giving instructions. CAHQS investigates safety-relevant communication risks at these crossroads, developing evidence-based strategies to minimize medication-related risks and adverse drug events.

3. Error Prevention

Many preventable adverse events arise from critical communication failures during patient handovers, interprofessional collaboration, and transitions between care institutions. CAHQS identifies how these communication breakdowns occur and designs targeted interventions to reinforce safety protocols, reducing associated risks.

4. Medical Error Disclosure

Communication surrounding medical errors significantly influences patient outcomes and trust in healthcare systems. Poorly managed disclosures can disrupt care, delay corrective actions, and damage patient-provider relationships. CAHQS ensures evidence-based standards for effective error disclosure, approaching it as an ongoing relational process rather than mere information transmission. It also emphasizes support for healthcare providers, recognizing their role as "second victims" who often experience significant distress following adverse events. By promoting provider resilience and reducing burnout, CAHQS strengthens the overall healthcare system's quality, safety, and sustainability.

Commitment to Healthcare Excellence

Through its interdisciplinary applied research and global network, CAHQS sustainably integrates evidence-based communication practices into healthcare standards, advancing safer practices and organizational cultures. This approach aims to transform critical communication risks into proactive opportunities for enhancing patient safety and quality care.

Web: www.patientsafetycenter.org

Institute of Economics

The institute of Economics (IdEP; <http://www.idep.eco.usi.ch>) supports research and teaching activities in the broad field of economics and public management. The research interests of IdEP members also include health economics and public health. Their research focuses on issues of public interest such as ageing and cognitive decline, mental health, sleep deprivation, and the determinants of the increasing health care costs. IdEP also organizes a Master of advanced studies in health economics and management (NETMEGS). Since 2012 IdEP coordinates the activity of the Center for Economic and Political Research on Aging (CEPRA). The center aims at stimulating empirical research on population aging, pension and health care design and spending, at promoting academic training on this topic, and at disseminating research output to a specialized and a general audience, through workshops, conferences, and public debates.

IdEP is part of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+), the Swiss Society of Health Economics (SGGÖ), and the national research project Swiss learning health.

Peer-reviewed publications



Peer-reviewed publications

A comprehensive computer literature search of PubMed/MEDLINE database was carried out independently by two different collaborators of the AFRI. The last database search was performed in April 2025. The string search was built using keywords based on the different EOC sites.

The selection process for this analysis included peer-reviewed articles listed in PubMed/MEDLINE with at least one co-author affiliated with EOC. Only articles definitively published in a scientific journal issue in 2024 were included; those listed as “Online ahead of print” in PubMed/MEDLINE in 2024 were excluded from the analysis.

The Journal Quartile¹ of the scientific journals – based on the Journal Impact Factor² – in which EOC researchers published their peer-reviewed articles were also evaluated using data from the Journal Citations Reports (JCR) 2023 (released in 2024).

The scientific work carried out by the EOC researchers, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned above, produced **801** peer-reviewed articles. The EOC scientific production in 2024 slightly increase – as illustrated in Figure 4 – confirming the uptrend reported the previous year.

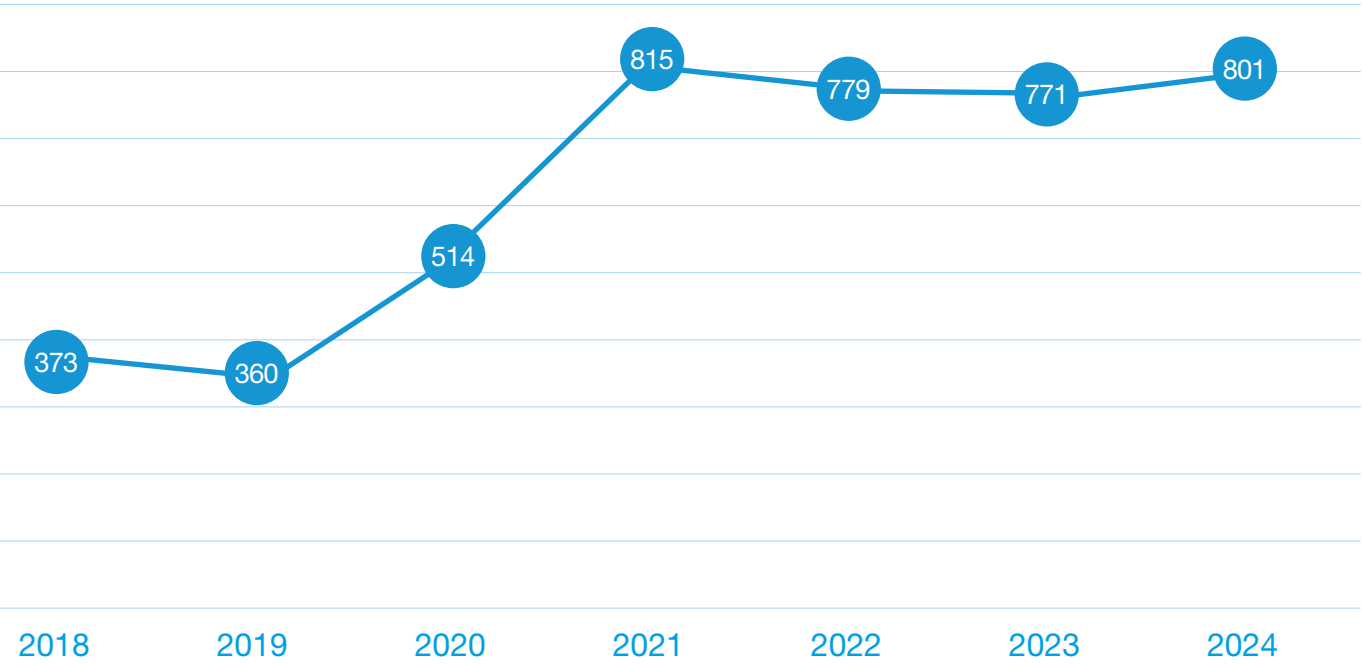


Figure 4.
Number of EOC peer-reviewed articles since 2018

Most peer-reviewed publications in 2024 were original articles or reviews (696, 87%) in line with 2023 (88%). Two-thirds of the original articles and reviews (434) were published in high-rated Q1 journals with an increase of 12% compared to the previous year, confirming the high quality of the EOC scientific outputs. Although the original or reviews articles (266, 38%) with the EOC reasearcher as the first or last author slightly decrease from 2023 (42%), a significant rise (+31%) has been observed in the number

of these articles published in Q1 journals. Even in 2024, the important network of international and national collaborations fostered the EOC research and produced most of the publications (91%). Key data are summarized in figures 5-9.

¹ Scientific journals are assigned to a subject category by JCR and ranked by Journal Impact Factor. The Journal rank is then transformed in a percentile value. The Journal percentile is used to calculate the Journal Quartile. Q1: Journal percentile ≥ 75; Q2: 75 < Journal percentile ≤ 50; Q3: 50 < Journal percentile ≤ 25; Q4: 25 < Journal percentile (Source: Clarivate Analytics).

² Journal Impact Factor is defined as citations to the journal in the JCR year to items published in the previous two years, divided by the total number of citable items (i.e., articles and reviews) published in the journal in the previous two years. A Journal Impact Factor of 1.0 means that, on average, the articles published one or two years ago have been cited one time (Source: Clarivate Analytics).

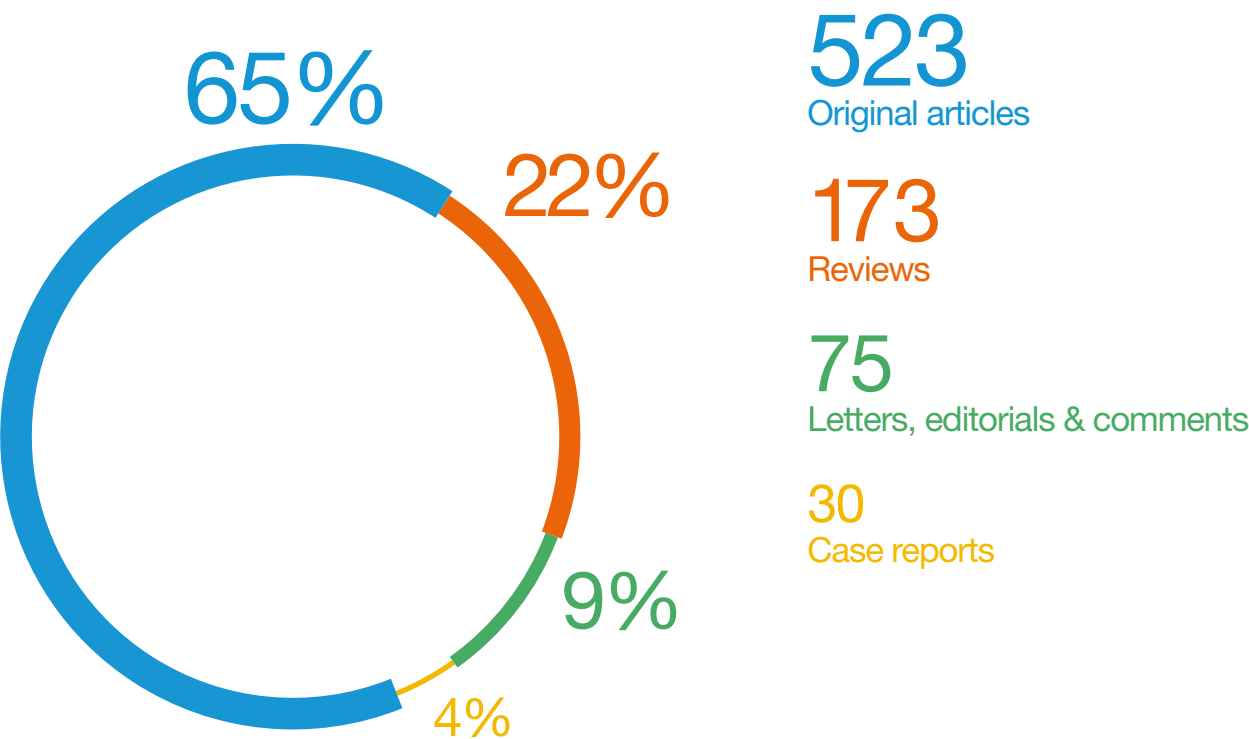


Figure 5.
Number and type
of the peer-reviewed
articles published
in 2024 (N = 801)

Meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus papers are classified as original articles. Systematic reviews without meta-analyses and protocols are classified as reviews.

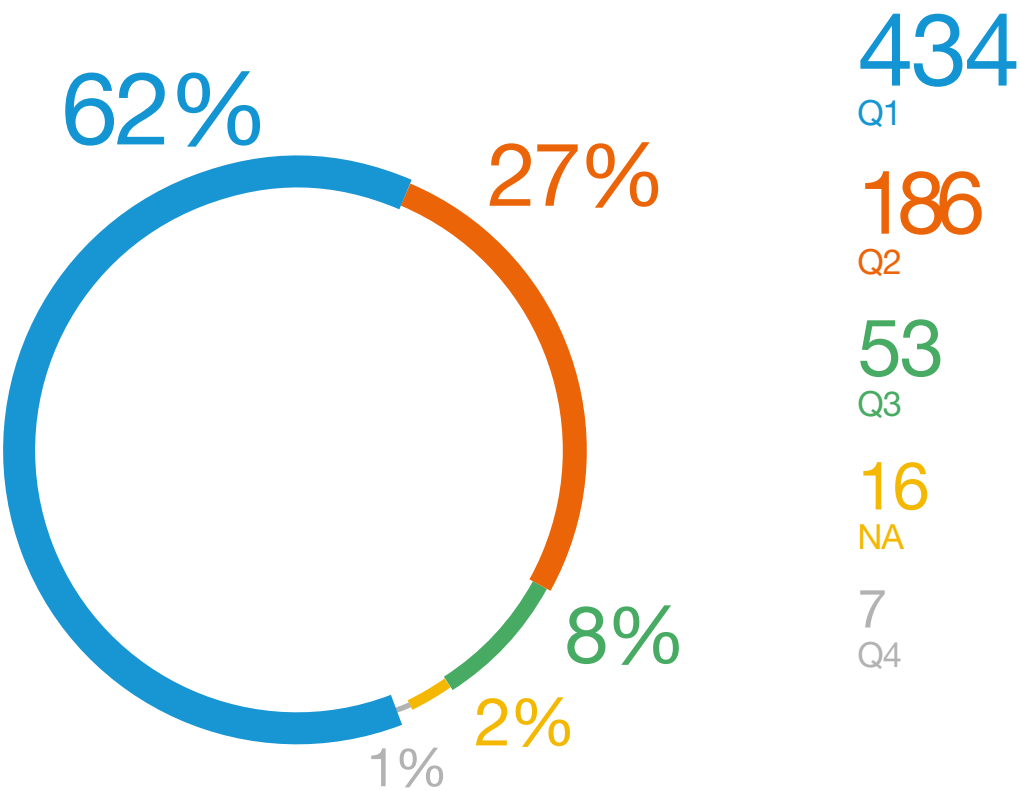


Figure 6.
Journal Quartile
of the scientific
journals in which
peer-reviewed original
and review articles
were published in
2024 (N = 696)

Journals can appear in multiple subject categories; in this case, the highest Journal Quartile was selected. Scientific journals without Journal Impact Factor are classified as NA.

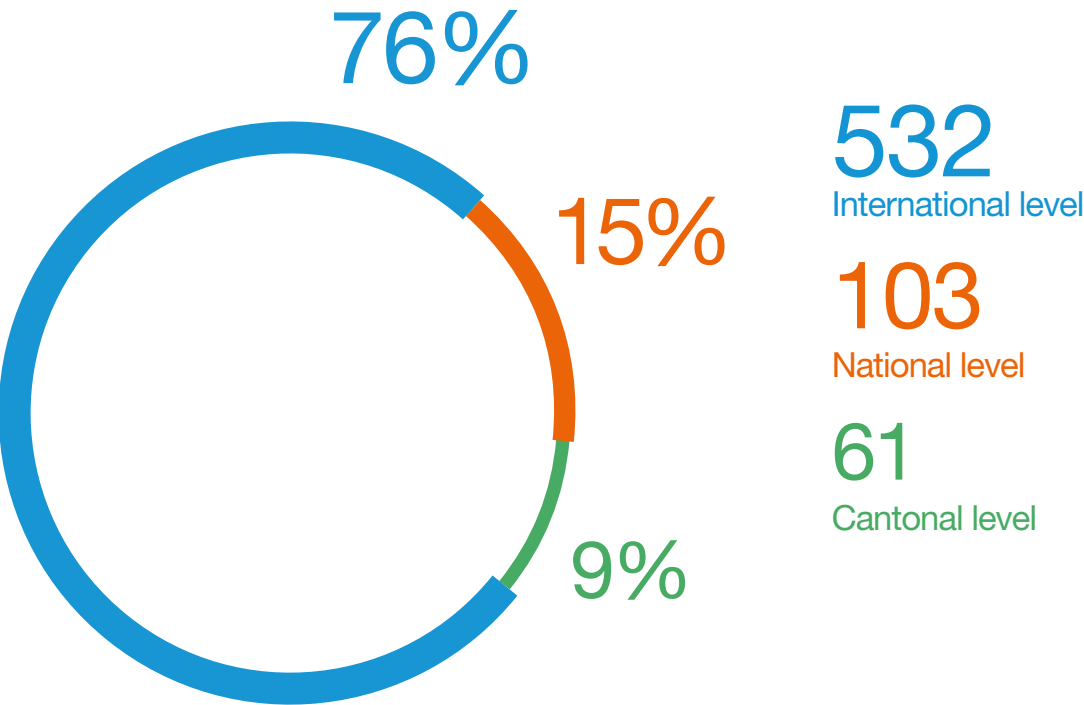


Figure 7.
Type of scientific
collaboration
(local, national
of international)
in peer-reviewed
original and
review articles
published in 2024
(N = 696)

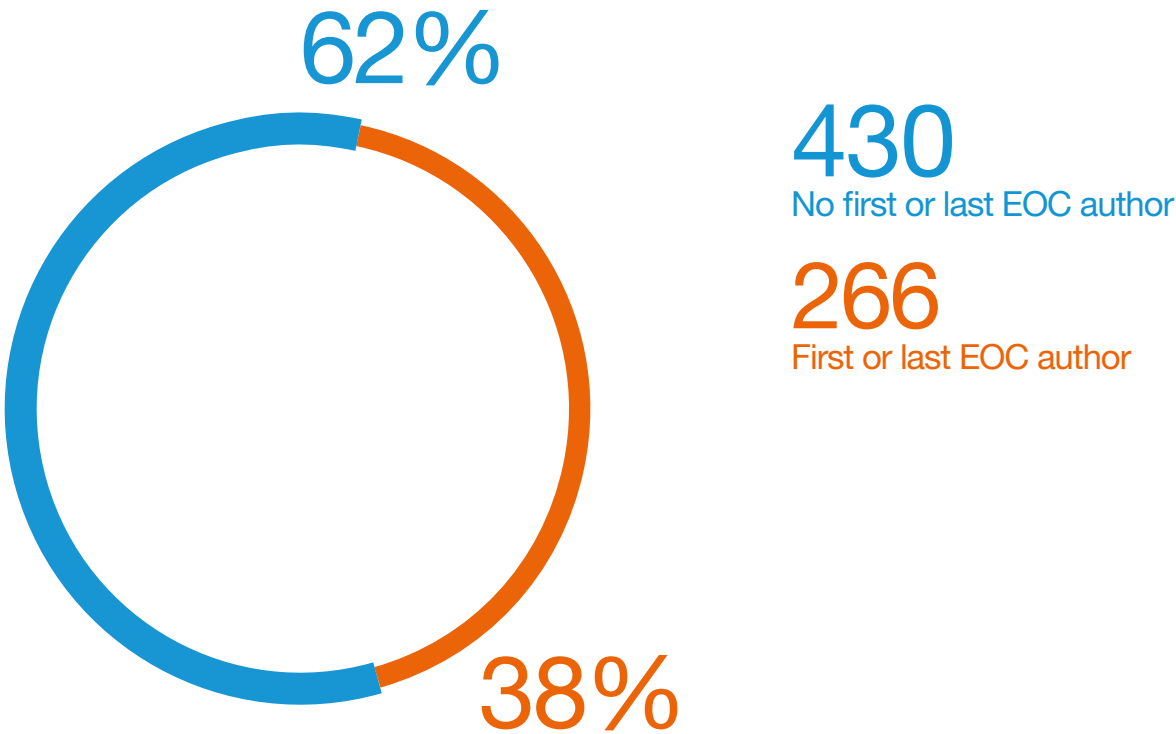


Figure 8.
Number of peer-
reviewed original
and review articles
published by EOC
researchers as
first or last author
in 2024 (N = 696)

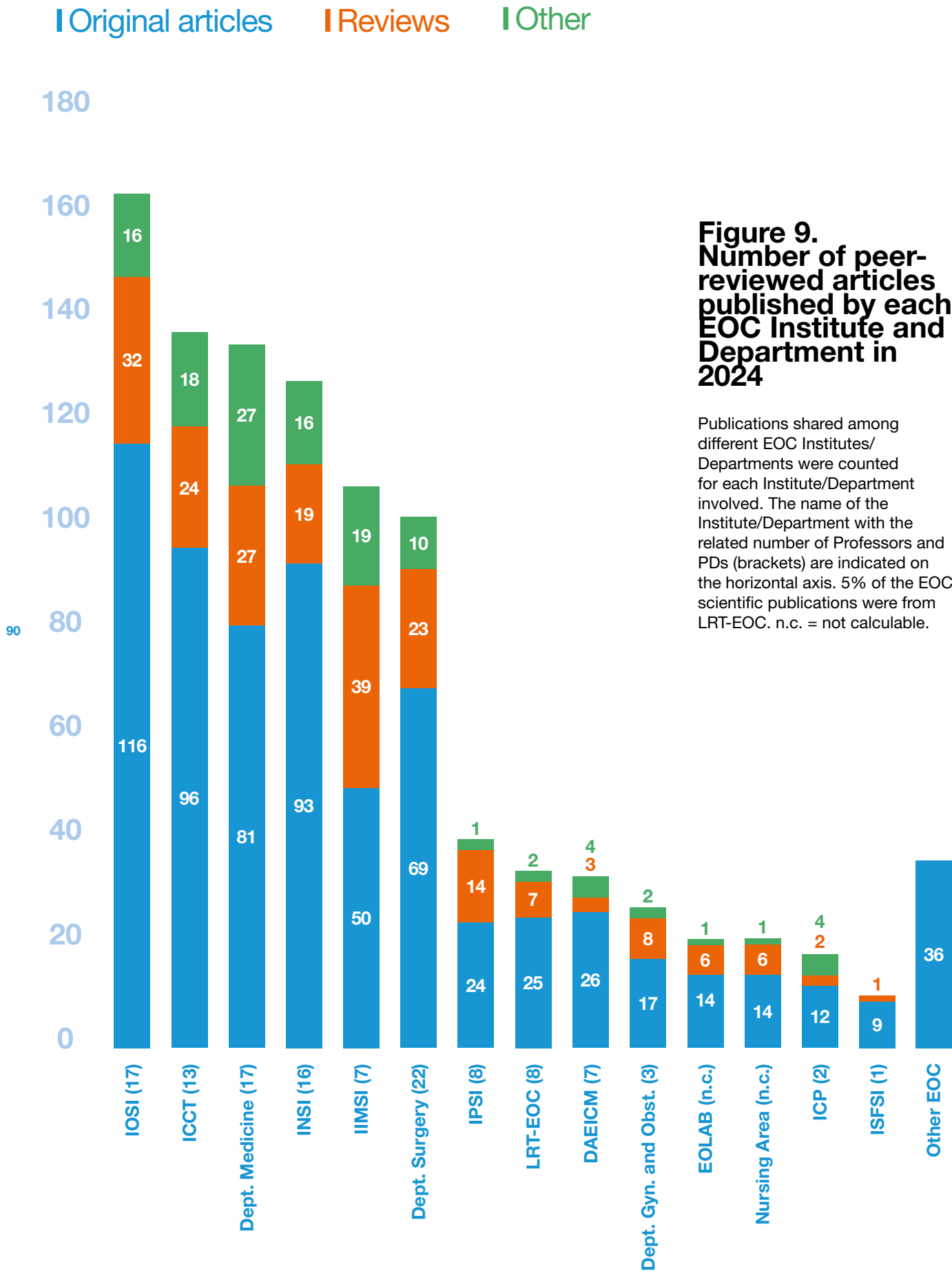


Figure 9.
Number of peer-reviewed articles published by each EOC Institute and Department in 2024

Publications shared among different EOC Institutes/ Departments were counted for each Institute/Department involved. The name of the Institute/Department with the related number of Professors and PDs (brackets) are indicated on the horizontal axis. 5% of the EOC scientific publications were from LRT-EOC. n.c. = not calculable.

Overall, EOC research activities achieved high productivity and quality in 2024, maintaining the impressive quantitative and qualitative growth recorded since 2021. Beyond the numbers, the notable increase in original articles and reviews published in top-ranked (Q1) journals, even as first or last author, is a clear indicator of the improved scientific output of research conducted across EOC hospitals and laboratories. This upward trajectory highlights EOC's commitment to advancing medical knowledge and fostering international collaborations to drive future research.

Newly activated research projects



Research projects conducted at the EOC hospitals and laboratories are recorded into a dedicated database. In 2024, a total of **111** research projects involving persons that require authorization by the Ethics Committee and/or Swissmedic were activated, slightly decreasing from 2023 (129). As of 31.12.2024, **351** research projects were ongoing at the EOC hospitals and laboratories.³ Figure 10 shows the number of EOC research projects by type of research: most (59%, 65) were non-clinical trials,⁴ almost equally divided between the sub-categories “research involving persons” (31) and

“further use of pre-existing health-related data and/or biological material” (34). The EOC General Consent was used in one-third of the non-clinical trials, primarily for “further use” research projects (20/22). The remaining were clinical trials⁵ (N=46) of which 52% investigating medicinal products, 28% other interventions which are neither medicinal or transplant products (i.e., other clinical trials), 9% medical devices, 7% in vitro diagnostic medical devices and 4% transplant products. According to available data, EOC researchers conceived and promoted 46 research projects in 2024, which were mostly non-clinical trials (N=38).

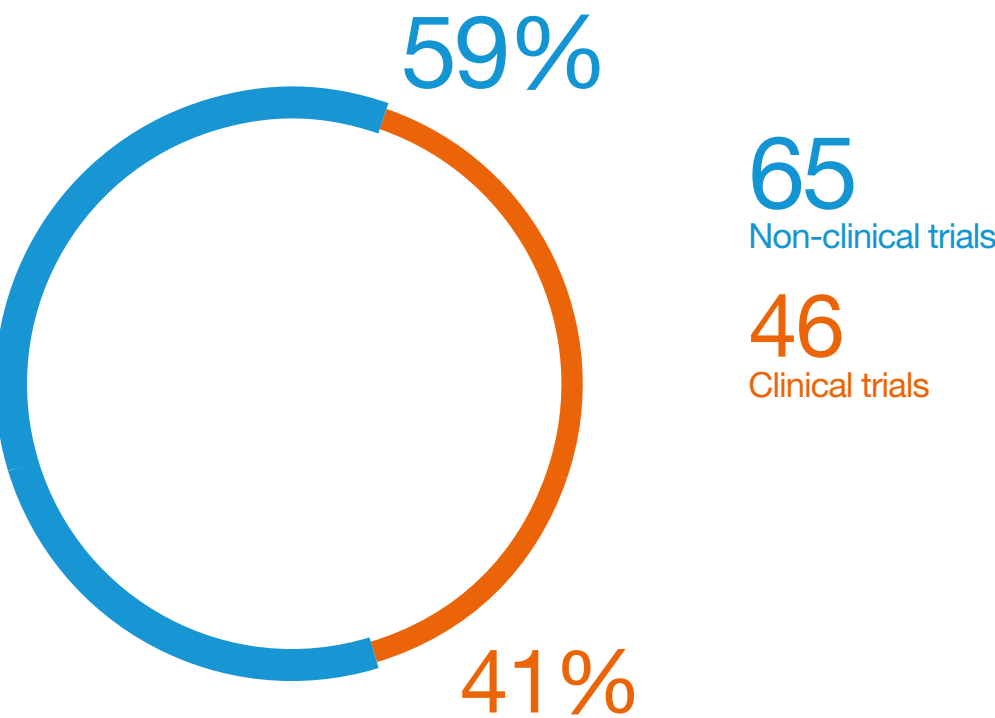


Figure 10.
Number of EOC research projects activated in 2024 (N = 111)

³ Data only available from 2021. Research projects activated prior to 2021 and still ongoing are not included in the metrics.
⁴ Non-clinical trials are research projects in which biological material is sampled or health-related personal data is collected from a person in order to: (a) answer a scientific question; or (b) make further use for research purposes of the biological material or the health-related personal data (Source: Human Research Ordinance, HRO).
⁵ Clinical trials are research projects involving individuals that prospectively assigns them to undergo one or more interventions in order to study the effects thereof on health or on the structure and function of the human body (Clinical Trials Ordinance, ClinO).

As shown in Figure 11, more than half of the EOC research projects involved more than one participating site internationally (N=41) or nationally (N=27).

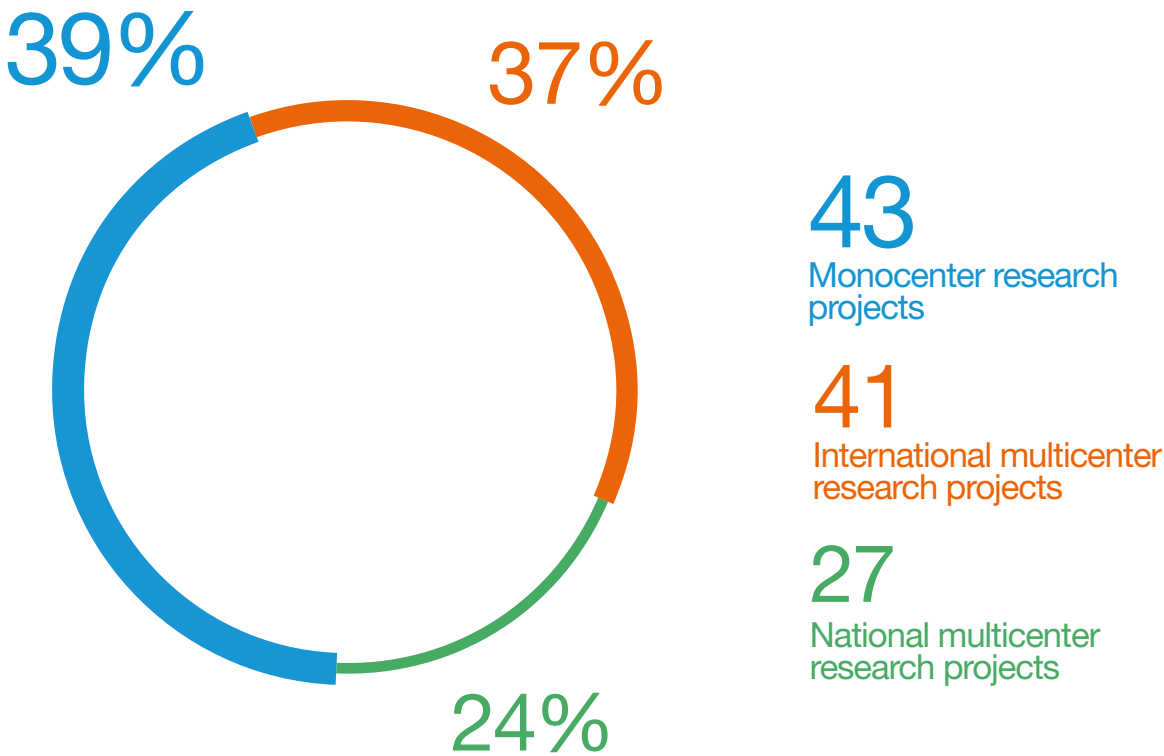


Figure 11.
Number of EOC research projects with single or multiple participating sites activated in 2024 (N = 111)

Figure 12 summarizes the number of EOC research projects activated in 2024, by clinical and non-clinical trials and by Institute/Department.

The research project was assigned based on the EOC affiliation of the Sponsor-Investigator/Project Leader/Principal investigator, whichever applies.

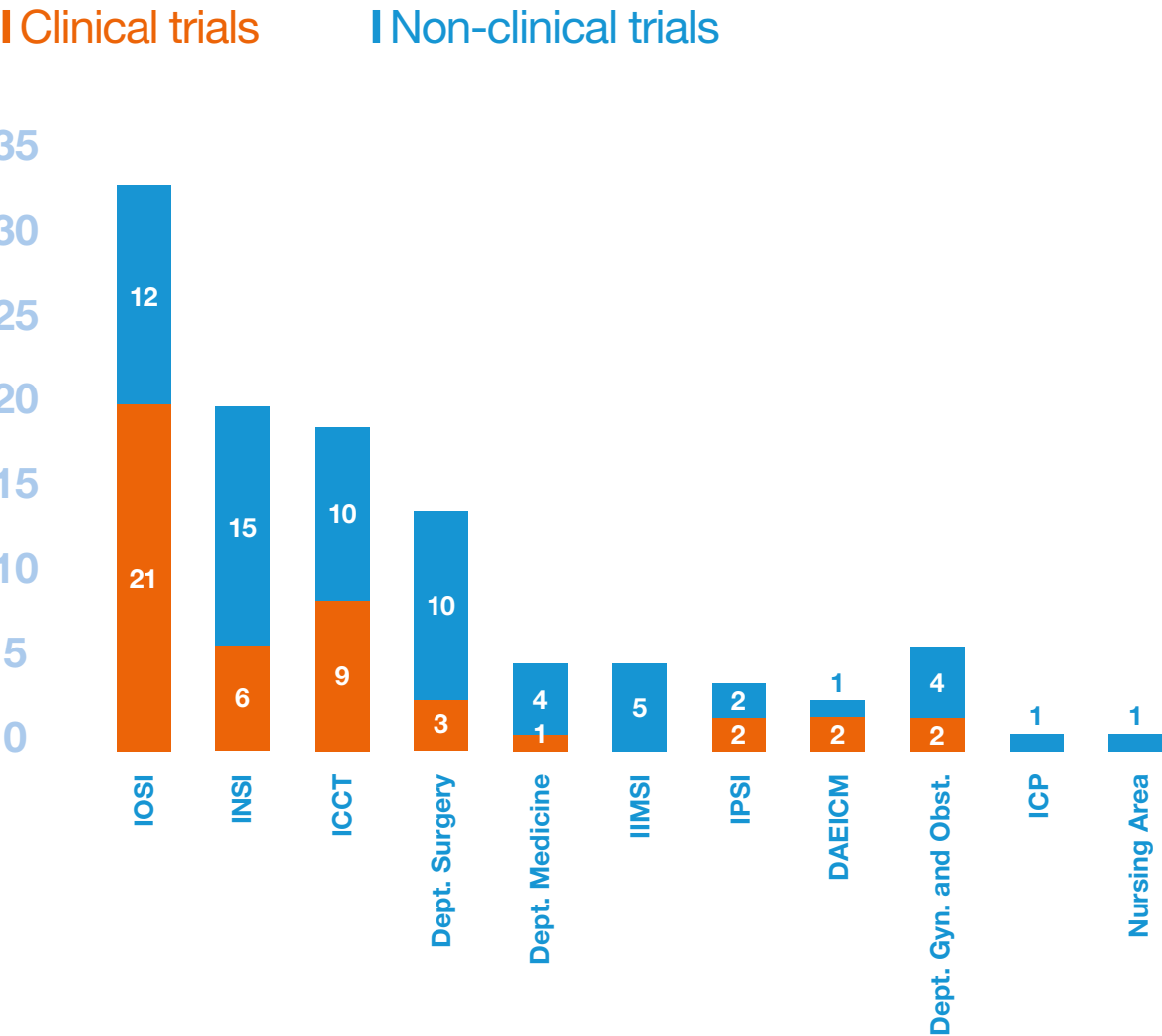


Figure 12.
Number of EOC research projects activated in 2024 by Institute/Department (N = 111)

Clinical and non-clinical trials are also shown.



Despite a slight decrease in newly activated research projects across EOC hospitals and laboratories in 2024, the overall statistics are consistent with the data reported in previous years.

External funding for research projects



In 2024, EOC secured substantial external funding to support its clinical and translational research activities. Overall, these efforts generated approximately CHF 11.8 million in external funding, representing a 4% increase compared to CHF 11.4 million in 2023. Approximately 74% of this funding was allocated to clinical research, while 26% was dedicated to translational research projects. These external funds were obtained through industry collaborations, competitive grants, foundations and institutional partnerships.

Such financial support is crucial for driving innovative research, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. Throughout the year, research groups initiated 122 new clinical and translational research projects. The steady growth in externally funded projects and the sustained engagement in long-term initiatives highlights EOC’s commitment to advancing scientific innovation and improving patient care, reinforcing its role as a leader in healthcare research in Ticino

Clinical research

In 2024, clinical research activity attracted more than **CHF 8.8 million** primarily driven by the following: IOSI, ICCT, INSI and Department of Medicine.

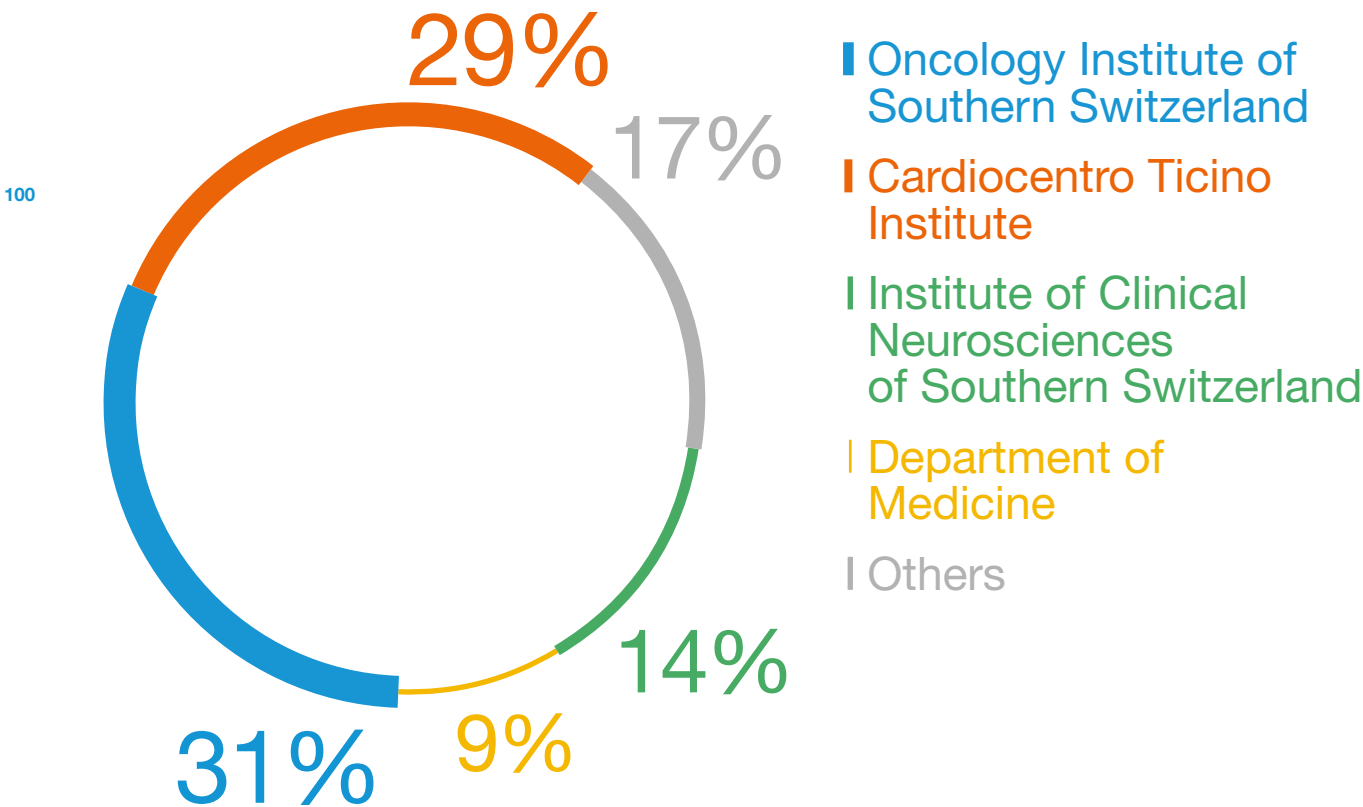


Figure 13. Primary Clinical Research Beneficiaries of External Research Sources in 2024

In recent years, EOC researchers in these fields have established new scientific collaborations with Swiss academic partners and have actively pursued competitive funding opportunities from Swiss government agencies. While these core areas received almost 88% of the total external research funding in 2024, the remaining 12% was allocated to research initiatives supporting the development of emerging research domains within EOC and encouraging greater involvement of medical doctors in clinical research.

The majority (39%) of funding for clinical research came from industry. Notably in 2024, the percentage of research funding from competitive grants awarded by Swiss government agencies rose from 10% in 2023 to 27% in 2024, representing a significant increase. This achievement reflects the improved quality and relevance of EOC’s clinical research. It marks the beginning of a new era for clinical research at EOC, characterized by stronger academic collaborations and greater success in securing competitive research funding.

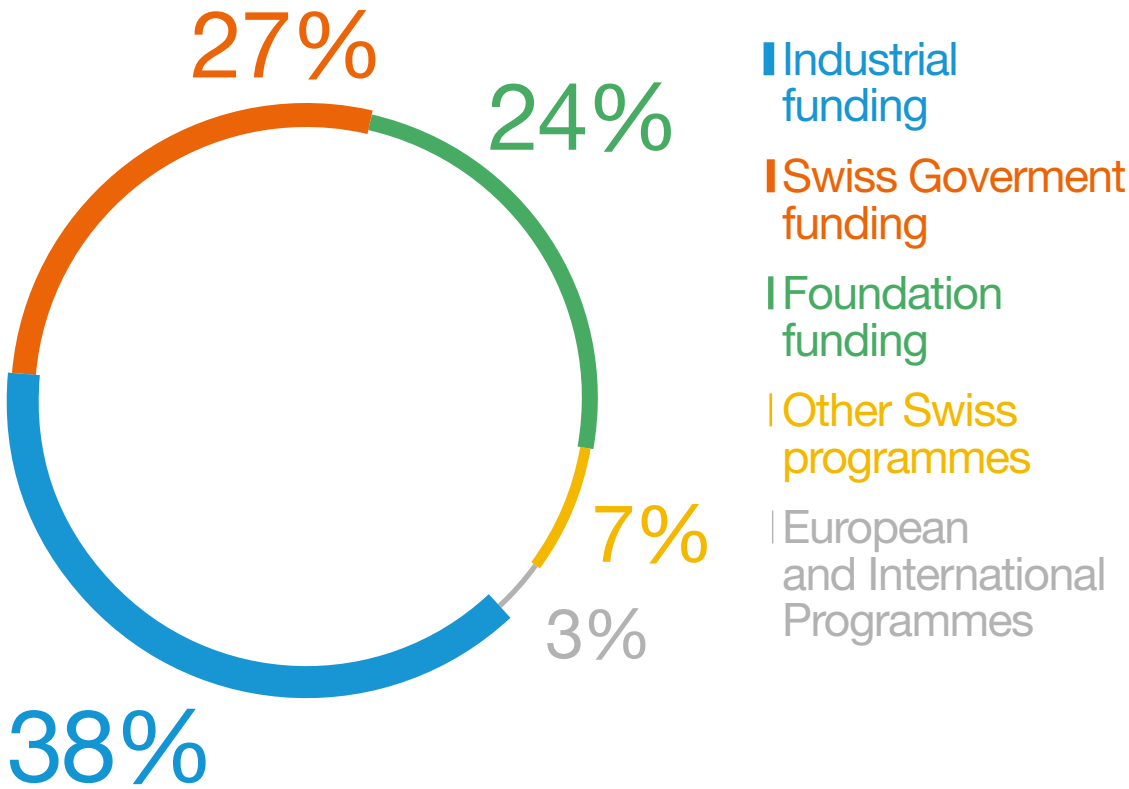


Figure 14. Sources of Research Funding for Clinical Research Projects in 2024

Translational research

During 2024 research projects from the LRT-EOC received nearly **CHF 3 million**. The majority of funding for translational research came from foundations (70%) committed to bridging the gap between basic research and clinical applications. This type of funding has been crucial for supporting innovative, early-stage EOC research that may not yet qualify for traditional public

funding. The second main source of external funding for LRT came from Swiss government sources (28%), particularly through the **SNSF (Swiss National Science Foundation)**, Switzerland's primary funding agency supporting scientific excellence and innovation. Grants awarded by such institutions play a crucial role in driving translational research forward, helping to turn scientific discoveries into tangible medical treatments and technologies

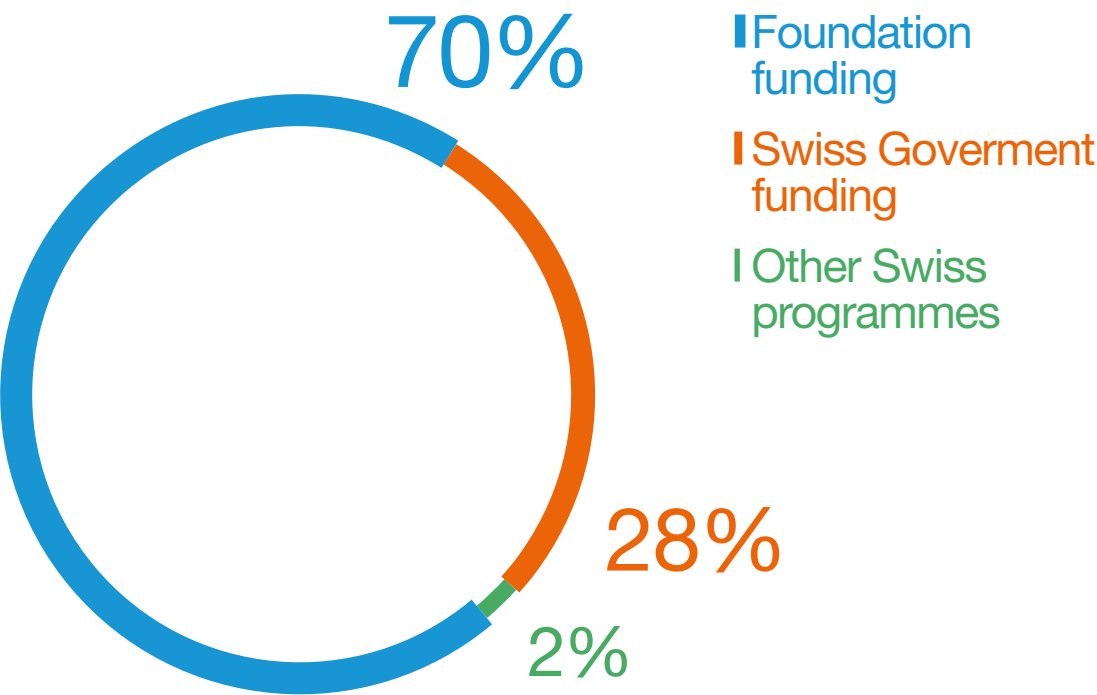


Figure 15.
Sources
of Research Funding
for Translational
Research Projects
in 2024



Research highlights



- Overall, **EOC research activities continued their steady growth of productivity and outstanding quality** of the scientific outputs during 2024, with an increase of scientific publications as first or last author in top-ranked journals and of funded research projects.
- **801** peer-reviewed scientific articles were published in 2024, most of them as **original or review articles (696, 87%)**.
- Both **clinical and translational research** is conducted at the EOC. In 2024, the majority of the scientific output of the EOC research was related to clinical research.
- Original and review articles in high-rated scientific journals (**Q1 ranking**) **increased over 2023 (62%)**, confirming the high quality of the EOC scientific production.
- The **national and international network** of collaborations fostered the EOC research activities and scientific production (91% of peer-reviewed articles).
- **38% (266) of original and reviews articles with the first or last EOC author.** Although a slightly decrease from 2023 (42%), a significant rise (+31%) has been observed in the number of these articles published in high-rated Q1 journals. This means that several high-impact research projects were conceived and conducted at EOC.
- **111 new research projects involving persons** – 65 non-clinical and 46 clinical trials – were activated and **351 research projects** were ongoing at the EOC hospitals and labs in 2024.
- **CHF 11.8 Mio of external funding** was obtained for clinical and translational research activities in 2024, representing a 4% increase over 2023. Approximately **74% (CHF 8.8 Mio)** of this funding was allocated to **clinical research**, primarily driven by IOSI, ICCT, INSI and Dept. of Medicine, while 26% was dedicated to translational research projects. The majority of funding came from industry (39%) for clinical research and from foundations (70%) for translational research.

Complete list of publications



Publications are listed in alphabetical order. EOC authors are highlighted in bold.

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List of publications by Institute/ Department



Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland

Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

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Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

Original articles

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Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

Original articles

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Institute of Pharmacological Sciences of Southern Switzerland

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Original articles

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Institute of Laboratory Medicine (EOLAB)

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Original articles

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Cantonal Institute of Pathology (ICP)

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Original articles

1. Bendixen KK, Forsberg-Pho S, **Dazio G**, Hansen EE, Eriksen SK, **Epistolio S**, **Merlo E**, Boldorini R, Venesio T, Movilia A, Caprera C, Arnspar EC, Børgesen M, Christensen UB, Frattini M, Petersen RK. One-instrument, objective microsatellite instability analysis using high-resolution melt. *PLoS One*. 2024;19:e0302274. PMID [38662796](#)

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Department of Medicine EOC

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Department of Surgery EOC

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Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics EOC

Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

Original articles

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Department of Anesthesiology, Emergency and Intensive Care Medicine EOC

Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

Original articles

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Original articles

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- Gagliano V, Salemme G, Ceschi A, Greco A, Grignoli N, **Clivio L**, **Merler A**, Feyling Benitez V, Giannini J, Zandonà M, Gabutti L. Antipsychotic, benzodiazepine and Z-drug prescriptions in a Swiss hospital network in the Choosing Wisely and COVID-19 eras: a longitudinal study. *Swiss Med Wkly*. 2024;154:3409. PMID [39509532](#)
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- Aggarwal S, Wang Z, Rincon Fernandez Pacheco D, **Rinaldi A**, Rajewski A, Callemeyn J, Van Loon E, Lamarthée B, Covarrubias AE, Hou J, Yamashita M, Akiyama H, Karumanchi SA, Svendsen CN, Noble PW, Jordan SC, Breunig JJ, Naesens M, **Cippà PE**, Kumar S. SOX9 switch links regeneration to fibrosis at the single-cell level in mammalian kidneys. *Science*. 2024;383:eadd6371. PMID [38386758](#)
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Clinical Trial Unit EOC

Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

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Other EOC Services

Publications are listed in alphabetical order for each section: original articles (including meta-analyses, surveys, research letters, consensus and delphi-based consensus paper); reviews (including systematic reviews without meta-analyses, protocols); editorials or letters or comments; case reports. EOC authors affiliated with the Institute/Department are highlighted in bold.

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