Open position

PhD Student in Cancer Immunotherapy (100%)

Institute of Oncology Research (IOR), Bellinzona
and Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale (EOC), Lugano
at the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, USI, Switzerland

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Institute of Oncology Research (IOR), affiliated with USI, is a world leaders in cancer, basic immunology, and cancer immunology research. The Cancer Immunotherapy Lab, headed by Prof. Arianna Calcino, has been part of the IOR since 2019. The Calcino lab provides brand-new, fully equipped lab in an international, stimulating, dynamic, and friendly atmosphere. Prof. Calcino has published over 20 articles in peer-reviewed journals, such as Nature, Science, Nature Communications, and Cancer Cell (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=calcino+arianna&sort=date). Together with the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB), the IOR is a member of Bios+, a recently established non-profit association aiming to promote, support, and coordinate its members' scientific research and teaching activities (www.biosplus.ch). Bios+ is now housed in a brand-new high-tech research building in Bellinzona, with more than 20 research groups, with state-of-the-art labs and facilities.

Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale (EOC) is the public hospital network of Canton Ticino. The Service of Endocrinology and Diabetology, under the direction of Prof. Pierpaolo Trimbo, is the Cantonal referral center for Differentiated Thyroid Carcinomas (DTCs). Prof. Trimbo published over 200 papers in international peer-reviewed journals (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=trimbo+p&sort=date&size=200) and he is key opinion leader in thyroid disease, involved in international guidelines board. About 30 cases of DTCs annually are diagnosed and treated at EOC; most of them are subsequently followed up by the endocrinology team of the EOC. Furthermore, all histological samples are initially evaluated at Istituto Cantonale di Patologia (ICP) of the EOC and it is estimated that during the last 20 years about 600 DTC were diagnosed at the ICP. The majority of patients diagnosed with DTC during this period are currently followed up at our institution.

Fondazione Scazziga fully funds the position (4 years - 100%). Salary is defined by the SNSF salary scale.

Starting June 2024.
Project background
Although worldwide several institutions implemented the analysis of molecular mutations of DTC, it is still unclear whether molecular analysis can contribute to predict its outcome. A growing body of literature has demonstrated that tumor cell-autonomous mechanisms are not sufficient per se to drive cancer initiation, highlighting the role of the surrender immune response as a potent modulator of tumor progression. However, very little is known about the immune response of this tumor and whether it may correlate with the 3-grade risk stratification of relapse generally used (i.e., high-, intermediated-, and low-risk).

Job description
The doctoral student will benefit from the scientific supervision of Prof. Pierpaolo Trimboli and Prof. Arianna Calcinotto. The successful candidate will work in the Calcinotto lab at the BIOS+ campus with frequent exchanges with the clinical department of endocrinology at EOC.

The candidate will be enrolled in the PhD program in Biomedical Science within the track on Cancer Biology and Oncology (www.biomed.usi.ch/en/study/doctoral-studies-biomedical-sciences/phd).

This position offers an exciting opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge research in thyroid cancers, working closely with a multidisciplinary and international team of researchers and clinicians dedicated to understanding the role of immune responses in DTCs.

Your profile
- A highly motivated applicant with a Master’s (or equivalent title) in any Life Sciences and a strong cancer research and immunology background
- Familiar with cell culture and molecular biology
- A team player with excellent communication and writing skills (English)
- Capable of independent thinking, ambitious, focused on discovery, and dedicated to performing research of the highest quality

Interested?
Please submit your application in a single PDF-File including a CV (with contact details of referees) and Motivation Letter to arianna.calcinotto@ior.usi.ch; Pierpaolo.Trimboli@eoc.ch (reference: Surname_AC_PT_PhD2024).

Owing to the large number of applications received, only those applicants whose profiles are likely to fit the positions will be notified for further details and eventual interviews. We will start interviewing qualified applicants shortly after the submission deadline. The application deadline is March 31, 2024.

Applications received before March 31, 2024 will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.