

Program

Joint ForTra-BIH Workshop on Gene and Cell Therapy (GCT)

Where do we stand and where do we (want to) go?



May 18 and 19, 2026



Goethe University Frankfurt/Main
Campus Westend, Casino-Gebäude
Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 1
60323 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

Day 1 (May 18, 2026)

12.00–13.00	Registration & Get-together & Lunch
13.00–13.20	Dr. Tanja Rosenmund (SPARK-BIH and National Strategy for Gene- and Cell-Based Therapies), Prof. Dr. Martin Zörnig (Managing Director, ForTra gGmbH): Welcome
13.20–14.00	Keynote lecture 1: Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte (San Diego Institute of Science, Altos Labs, USA): “Reprogramming Aging: Toward a Biology of Health and Longevity”
14.00–14.30	Dr. Christoph Conrad (Regulatory Support Unit, BIH, Berlin, Germany): “Regulation as a Compass – Lessons from Navigating the Complexity of Academic Translation”
14.30–15.00	Dr. Jessica Lukassen and Dr. Jana Rabe (HERTIN & Partner Rechts- und Patentanwälte, Berlin, Germany): “Insights into legal strategies for protecting inventions in the field of gene and cell therapy”
15.00–15.45	Coffee break & Networking
15.45–16.45	GMP Production Panel: Manufacturing gaps, hospital exemption, <i>in vivo</i> delivery perspectives Chair: Prof. Dr. Ulrike Köhl (University of Leipzig, Germany) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Melissa van Pel (NecstGen, Leiden, The Netherlands)• Dr. Núria Gavaldà (Blood and Tissue Bank, Barcelona, Spain)• Dr. Knut Steffensen (Karolinska ATMP Center, Stockholm, Sweden)• Prof. Dr. Uwe Bücheler (Rentschler Biopharma SE, Laupheim, Germany)

16.45–17.45	Presentations of 3 ForTra-funded projects: Prof. Dr. Axel Schambach (Hannover Medical School, Germany): “Lentiviral vector-mediated gene therapy to treat hearing and balance loss in Usher 1B syndrome patients” Prof. Dr. Michael Sieweke (TU Dresden, Germany): “Development of proliferative human macrophages for cancer therapy” Dr. Momsen Reincke (Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany): “NMDAR-CAART cells to treat NMDAR encephalitis”
17.45–18.15	Coffee break & Networking
18.15–19.00	Keynote lecture 2: Prof. Dr. Carl June (Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, USA): “Precision Engineering in Allogeneic Design: Driving CAR-T Evolution Toward Off-the-Shelf Solutions for Solid Tumors”
19.00–21.00	Dinner & Networking

Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte

During life's early stages cells display high levels of plasticity, regeneration and resilience against stress, dysfunction and injury, which are key features of human health. Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte, previously the Roger Guillemin Chair and Professor at the Salk Institute, has contributed towards understanding the molecular basis underlying embryogenesis and early postnatal life, as well as gained insights into how to program and rejuvenate adult and diseased cells. He is developing technologies to program cells to states similar to those observed in the early, healthy stages of life, with the objective of developing universal health therapeutics to overcome human disease and aging.



Photo: © Private

Prof. Dr. Carl June

Carl June is a physician scientist and the Richard W. Vague Professor in Immunotherapy at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in the Departments of Medicine and Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. He is the director of the Center for Cellular Immunotherapies at the Perelman School of Medicine, and the Director of the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy at the University of Pennsylvania. Born in Colorado and raised in California, June graduated from the US Naval Academy and earned his medical degree from the Baylor College of Medicine. He spent his fourth year of medical school at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, studying immunology and malaria. June conducted post-doctoral research in transplantation biology at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle from 1983 to 1986. June served as president of the Clinical Immunology Society and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Medicine. He is the scientific co-founder of Tmunity Therapeutics (acquired by Kite Pharma), Dispatch Biotherapeutics, Capstan Therapeutics (acquired by Abbvie) and Bluewhale Bio. CTL019 was the first FDA-approved gene-modified cell therapy in the United States.



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Day 2 (May 19, 2026)

9.00–10.30	<p>VC Panel Chair: PD Dr. Axel Polack (Polack Holding GmbH, Munich, Germany)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof. Dr. Thomas Voit (University College London, UK)• Dr. Annegret de Baey (Seventure Partners SA, Paris, France)• Dr. Fei Tian (MIG Capital, Munich, Germany)• Dr. Catriona Crombie (Catriona Crombie Consulting, Cambridge, UK)• Dr. Therese Liechtenstein (4BIO Capital, Munich, Germany)• Dr. Peter Neubeck (Kurma Partners, Paris, France)
10.30–11.00	Coffee break & Networking
11.00–12.15	<p>Short presentations of teams funded by the National Strategy of Gene- and Cell-Based Therapies:</p> <p>Dr. Kathrin Kusch (Medical University Göttingen, Germany): “Hearing the Light”</p> <p>Prof. Dr. Evelyn Ullrich (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany) and Prof. Dr. Toni Cathomen (University Hospital Freiburg, Germany): “Engineered NK cells entering the stage: translation of AML-targeted CAR-NK cells towards clinical application”</p> <p>Prof. Dr. Hildegard Büning (Hannover Medical School, Germany) and Prof. Dr. Michael Hudecek (University Hospital Würzburg, Germany): “<i>In Vivo</i> Generation of Chimeric Antigen Receptor T cells with T cell retargeted Adeno-Associated Virus Vectors”</p>

Prof. Dr. Wolfram Zimmermann (Medical University Göttingen, Germany): “Genome editing in patients with DMD – from bench to bedside”

Dr. Anna Resch (University Hospital Freiburg, Germany): “Next generation corneal repair: a bioengineered solution and its regulatory roadmap”

PD Dr. Dr. Roland Schelker (University Hospital Regensburg, Germany): “ESOSTEM155: miRNA-boosted TCR-T therapy for sarcoma”

Dr. Philippe Vollmer Barbosa (Hannover Medical School, Germany): “iGUARD – bring back life into breathing”

PD Dr. Jennifer Altomonte (Technical University of Munich, Germany): “Fighting cancer through fusion”

Prof. Dr. Amar Deep Sharma (Hannover Medical School, Germany): “RNA-HEALER: RNA Therapeutics for Liver Fibrosis”

12.15–12.30 Introductory Pitches for Poster Presentations

12.30–14.00 Lunch & Networking & Invited poster presentation

14.00–14.45 Keynote lecture 3: **Prof. Dr. Alessandro Aiuti** (San Raffaele Telethon Institute for Gene Therapy (SR-Tiget) and Università VitaSalute San Raffaele, Milano, Italy): “The Journey of Gene Therapy for Rare Diseases: From Research to Medicines”

14.45–15.30 European Perspective Panel
Chair: **Prof. Dr. Annette Künkele-Langer** (Charité –Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany)

- **Prof. Dr. Thomas Voit** (University College London, UK)
- **Dr. Jim Lund** (CCRM Nordic, Gothenburg, Sweden)
- **Dr. Manel Juan** (Hospital Clinic de Barcelona, Spain)
- **Prof. Dr. Hildegard Büning** (Hannover Medical School, Germany)
- **Dr. Christian Gallus** (BIH and National Strategy for Gene- and Cell-Based Therapies, Berlin, Germany)

15.30–15.45 Coffee break & Networking

15.45–16.45 Business Presentations

Dr. Felix Lorenz (Captain T Cell GmbH, Berlin, Germany):
“Boosting efficacy of TCR- and CAR-T cells using a novel TGFβ switch receptor to counteract the hostile tumor microenvironment”

Dr. Sonja Steppan (Fresenius Group, Bad Homburg, Germany):
“EASYGEN – A European Consortium enabling Decentralized Hospital-Based CAR-T Manufacturing at the Point of Care”

Prof. Dr. Halvard Böning (Institute for Transfusion Medicine and Immunohematology, Goethe University, at German Red Cross Blood Service Baden-Württemberg-Hessen, Institute Frankfurt):
“The journey of an academic cell therapy medicine towards commercialization: The Obnitix story”

Dr. Liane Preußner (Immatic Biotechnologies GmbH, Tübingen, Germany): “Delivering the Power of PRAME-directed T cells to Cancer Patients”

16.45 Prize Winners, wrap up: Where do we need to go with GCT, Farewell

Prof. Dr. Alessandro Aiuti

Alessandro Aiuti is Deputy Director Clinical Research of the San Raffaele Telethon Institute for Gene Therapy (SR-Tiget) and Head of the Pediatric Immunohematology Unit at IRCCS San Raffaele Hospital in Milan. He is also Full Professor of Pediatrics and Director of the Postgraduate School in Pediatrics at Vita-Salute San Raffaele University.

After graduating in Medicine and Surgery from the University “La Sapienza” of Rome in 1990 and earned a PhD in Human Biology in 1996, he completed postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School in Boston, focusing on hematopoietic stem cells. His research has made major contributions to the field of gene therapy for rare genetic diseases of the immune system (ADA-SCID, WAS) and lysosomal storage disorders (MLD, MPSI).

Professor Aiuti’s pioneering work led to the first successful gene therapy for ADA-SCID, MLD and WAS, resulting in the European approval of the drug Strimvelis in 2016, Libmeldy in 2020 and Waskyra in 2025. He has authored over 300 publications in top-tier journals, including Nature Medicine, Science, The Lancet, and The New England Journal of Medicine.

He has received numerous awards, such as the Else Kröner Fresenius Prize for Medical Research 2020.



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