

Christoph Bock becomes the New Chair of Medical Informatics at MedUni Vienna

Christoph Bock has been appointed as professor of medical informatics at the Medical University of Vienna and head of the Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Decision Support at CeMSIIS, starting 1 January 2021. The bioinformatician and genome researcher joins MedUni Vienna from the neighboring CeMM Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. He will continue to lead his research group at CeMM, complementary to the new tasks at MedUni Vienna.

(Vienna, 01-01-2021) As a trained computer scientist with a broad range of interests, Christoph Bock has been working at the interface between biology, medicine, and computer science for many years. His research group combines data-driven methods (bioinformatics, machine learning, artificial intelligence) with modern techniques in molecular biology (genome sequencing, CRISPR technology, systems biology). His special focus is on the development and application of new methods for precision medicine, working in close cooperation with clinical researchers toward the aim of improving diagnosis and therapy.

Christoph Bock is a principal investigator at the CeMM Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna, where he has led a research group since 2012. Before that, he was a postdoc at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard and at Harvard University (2008-2011), and a PhD student at the Max Planck Institute for Informatics (2004-2008). He is also scientific coordinator of the Biomedical Sequencing Facility of CeMM and MedUni Vienna, “key researcher” at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Rare and Undiagnosed Diseases (LBI-RUD), fellow of the European Lab for Learning and Intelligent Systems (ELLIS), and elected member of the Young Academy of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. He has received important research awards, including the Otto Hahn Medal of the Max Planck Society (2009), an ERC Starting Grant (2016-2021), an ERC Consolidator Grant (2021-2026), and the Overton Prize of the International Society for Computational Biology (2017). For 2019 and 2020 he was included in the global list of “Highly Cited Researchers” by Clarivate Analytics (ISI Web of Science).

At MedUni Vienna, Christoph Bock wants to contribute to the rapidly advancing area of artificial intelligence / machine learning and to the development of new methods for precision medicine. His professorship is based at CeMSIIS (Center for Medical Statistics, Informatics, and Intelligent Systems), where he takes on the leadership of the Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Decision Support. Important goals include a strong research program in machine learning for biomedicine, prototypic applications in personalized medicine, and the training of a new generation of experts in “biomedical data science” who are just as familiar with computer science as they are with medicine and biology.

In order to make an important contribution to precision medicine in the treatment of cancer, immune disorders, and other diseases, Christoph Bock will combine methods from

bioinformatics and medical informatics with experimentally driven biomedical research and clinical collaborations. Through close links with the CeMM, where he will continue to work as principal investigator (with a reduced number of working hours), the anticipated work will connect highly innovative biomedical research and methods development to clinical validation together with collaborators at the MedUni Vienna. One specific example is the ERC Consolidator Grant (2021-2026) approved a few weeks ago, which seeks to develop and validate a new generation of CAR T-cell immunotherapies for the treatment of solid.

CeMM Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences is an international, independent and interdisciplinary research institution for molecular medicine under the scientific leadership of Giulio Superti-Furga. CeMM is oriented towards medical requirements and integrates basic research and clinical expertise to develop innovative diagnostic and therapeutic approaches for precision medicine. The main research areas are cancer, inflammation, metabolic and immune disorders as well as rare diseases. The research building of the institute is located on the campus of the Medical University of Vienna and the General Hospital. www.cemm.at

Medical University of Vienna (MedUni Vienna) is one of the most traditional medical education and research facilities in Europe. With almost 8,000 students, it is currently the largest medical training centre in the German-speaking countries. With 5,500 employees, 26 departments and two clinical institutes, 12 medical theory centres and numerous highly specialised laboratories, it is also one of Europe's leading research establishments in the biomedical sector. www.meduniwien.ac.at

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