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Press release

The CHU Toulouse University Hospital and the PRES - Cluster for Research and Higher Education - of the Toulouse University apply for the creation of a University-Hospital Ageing Institute dedicated to «*Ageing and disability prevention*»

The CHU Toulouse University Hospital and the PRES - Cluster for Research and Higher Education - of the Toulouse University, along with its associated establishments submit an Education and Research project, for the French government's plan entitled "Investment for the future".

In view of this, the University-Hospital Ageing Institute (IHU) stands a major role in the Toulouse region as it displays synergy and expertise for global assistance and support in ageing and disability issues. The Ageing Institute is intended to become an "Initiative of Excellence".

A national call for project, aiming at creating five different University-Hospital Institutes in France, is currently underway. The CHU Toulouse University Hospital and the Paul Sabatier University (UPS) Toulouse III, are today candidates for a University-Hospital Ageing Institute (IHU), dedicated to ageing and disability prevention.

This project is under construction since end 2009 and is led by Professor Bruno VELLAS, President of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics. Already it gets together more than 300 medical practitioners and researchers. It benefits from the support of different local authorities such as the Toulouse City Council, Departments' General Council and particularly the Council for the Department of Haute Garonne, the Midi-Pyrénées region, as well as support from the PRES Toulouse University's partners and also from major industrial partners.

Ageing: a worldwide public health issue

Each year, French life-expectancy increases by 3 months. France, like many developed and emerging countries, has to cope with a considerable and unprecedented ageing population increase. Reports indicate that by 2050, the number of persons aged 75 years or more, will double. This expansion highlights the major issue concerning frailty of old people. Fifty percent of those aged over 65 years, are already considered as fragile or at risk. The quality of care offered is even more crucial to prevent disability and to ensure a successful ageing process. This structural demographical growth leads to give priority action to the development and promotion of fundamental research in two fields: ageing and age-related diseases and health economics.

Ambitious transversal objectives for research, health economics and industries with important effects on public health

Today our communities must manage major national stakes: improving care dedicated to frail old persons, developing an adapted and efficient health plan and arranging financing for old age disability.

The Toulouse project meets this challenge as it is focused on Man and his related needs (care, prevention, access to innovation). It will be established on a Foundation status (like a local research network), based on a research, healthcare and education program that will be consistent, specific and competitive targeting 5 major goals:

- develop knowledge in the fields of cell death, inflammation, regeneration and metabolism;
- reduce old-age disability;
- increase the number of seniors that should benefit from research and innovation;
- reduce the cost of disability for older persons and the community;
- develop an efficient and innovative health plan dedicated to frail old people.

Major scientific and medical capacities, engaged in interactive process with multiple partners

Toulouse is the headquarters of the first and unique French G erontop ole (Centre for Gerontology). Its mandate has been renewed in 2009 and its teams are already renown at a national and international level for their expertise on ageing and disability; promising results are expected for the MAPT and the GuidAge studies (the outcomes of which have been published last June). The IHU project logically succeeds to the G erontop ole and will allow an important acceleration of works and results and will materialize innovation for the benefit of frail old persons and of our country.

Based on a Scientific Cooperation Foundation, that will ensure continued private funds and partnership management, the IHU project will federate the following partners:

- *14 UPS-INSERM mixed research unit teams*, all recently classified A or A+ by l'Agence d' valuation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Sup rieur (AERES); for example the Unit n 558, very much involved in frailty detection, is currently working on a platform in close collaboration with general and hospital medicine services. This partnership work is based on a staff of 55.000 persons aged over 65 years old and of 200.000 participants over 55 years. These units are very much committed to the implementation of fundamental research outcomes and lead full active work on cell death, regeneration, inflammation, fibrosis, metabolism and neurosciences;
- *The CHU Toulouse University Hospital and its teams of specialists of international reputation*. They include specialists from the Geriatric Department, the G erontop ole and its research networks, experts in the Cardio-vascular and Metabolic Departments as well as the Neurosciences Department. These favourable circumstances offer ways to setup innovative

clinical trials on consistent populations of patients, while benefiting from the range of necessary biomarkers, imaging and methodological tools;

- The French first ranked, *Toulouse School of Economics*, emphasizes work on health economics aspects related to ageing;
- The *PRES - Cluster for Research and Higher Education - of the Toulouse University*, particularly in social sciences;
- *Worldwide or regional competitiveness centres* such as: AGRIMIP, Cancer Bio Santé, Aérospatiale Valley, and the Cancéropôle (Cancer center) for the Southwestern region;
- *The e-Health centre* recently created, gets together a productive pool of industrial companies, health partners, patient organizations, research laboratories and fund providers.

Important socio-economical and technological impacts are expected. They will strengthen unexploited fields and will be the subject of most meticulous assessments.

A concrete and comprehensive project, at the crossroad of Science and Society and in the heart of international research

The IHU project will generate important and concrete impacts in a short, average and long term delay:

- Create a **platform** dedicated to old people presenting frailty risks that will federate public and private health professionals from Toulouse and other cities in the South-Western region of France. The related data base created by the IHU will allow a better sharing of information to enhance progress;
- The IHU will be settled in a 600m² area of the La Grave hospital, **in the heart of Toulouse**. With easy access, the centre will be granted even larger premises according to project expansion and by 2013 the historical site will be completely reorganized around public health issues;
- It will also become a place dedicated to **prevention** with extension and assessment of actions such as physical and cognitive exercises, nutrition, new technologies, E-Health etc;
- It will facilitate the access to **innovation and clinical research** and will enhance the application of scientific and technological findings;
- It will also act as a decision-making tool; its impacts on economy and the society will sustain public health programs;
- Lastly, it will reinforce **training** for professionals by developing new and innovative programs.

The international acknowledgement of Toulouse's teams, its deep involvement in the regional network will also enable the IHU to take part in international programs such as the worldwide IAGG / WHO collaborating program on Ageing. With its headquarters in Toulouse, the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics is represented in 70 countries and at the United Nations and counts 50 000 members.

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