



UNIVERSITETET
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NCMM 2024 Annual Report



NORDIC **EMBL**
PARTNERSHIP FOR
MOLECULAR MEDICINE

NCMBM
Norwegian Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Medicine
Nordic EMBL Partnership for Molecular Medicine

Welcome to the NCMM 2024 annual report

Inside, you will find highlights of our research breakthroughs, collaborative initiatives, funding successes, and community events, as well as stories that showcase the dedication and talent of our researchers, students, and staff. We hope this report offers an engaging insight into a year that has laid strong foundations for NCMBM's expanded mission in the years ahead.

This report summarises the achievements, milestones, and activities of the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Medicine (NCMM) during the 2024 calendar year. On 1 January 2025, NCMM became the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Medicine (NCMBM). As the events described here took place prior to this change, we refer to the Centre by its former name throughout.

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The year in Review



Director's Introduction

Dear colleagues, partners, and supporters,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you as we prepare to transition into the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Medicine (NCMBM) from 1 January 2025. This new name and expanded mandate reflect our commitment to advancing excellent research and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration across molecular biosciences and medicine.

In 2024, our community achieved significant breakthroughs. Our researchers made advances ranging from pioneering CRISPR-based technologies for treating monogenic immune diseases in the Haapaniemi group, to deciphering complex gene regulatory networks in cancer within the Mathelier and Kuijjer groups. Highlights include the introduction of SCORPION by the Kuijjer group—a computational method for modelling gene regulation in single-cell data, applied notably to colorectal cancer—and a collaborative publication by the Mathelier group on improving bioinformatics software quality through teamwork (*Bioinformatics*, 2024).

The Sahu group developed innovative methods to generate pancreatic cells from diverse cell types, advancing pancreatic cancer research. From my own lab, we assessed the worth of long read sequencing for rare disease diagnostics in real word setting. The Esguerra group uncovered important connections between environmental pollutants and increased autism risk.

Our funding successes reflect the ambition and quality of our research. We were proud to see the launch of the promising *SleepCog* project, supported by an ERC Starting Grant awarded to Charlotte Boccara at the end of 2023. She also secured seed funding for *FlexBrain*, a project developing flexible electrodes for brain activity measurement that may transform how we study the brain experimentally. Biswajyoti Sahu was awarded over 1.1 million euros to coordinate the DYNAMITE EU consortium for personalised ovarian cancer therapy, in addition to funding for advanced spatial single-cell and transcriptomics infrastructure to support research in our new building.

Our strategic involvement in national research infrastructures also grew stronger. Anita Kavlie, our EATRIS Norway coordinator, provided important input toward securing over 74 million NOK from the Research Council of Norway for *ATMP Norway*, a multi-nodal infrastructure for advanced therapy medicinal products, a project led by our collaborators at Oslo University Hospital. This initiative will be central to strengthening Norway's capabilities in translational medicine and accelerating the development of innovative treatments.

A shining highlight of 2024 was hosting the Nordic EMBL Partnership for Molecular Medicine conference here at NCMM. This major event reinforced our leadership role within the partnership

alongside increasing our visibility across Norway with the contribution of the Michael Sars Centre.

We were also immensely proud to see Marieke Kuijjer awarded the prestigious Blix Prize in 2024, recognising her outstanding contributions to cancer research in Norway. This honour reflects her scientific excellence and her leadership in computational biology.

Looking ahead, as NCMBM, we will continue to build on these foundations and deliver on our broadened mission—strengthening interdisciplinary research, expanding translational efforts, and fostering scientific innovation. Our upcoming move to the new Life Sciences Building in 2026 will offer a purpose-built environment that brings university and hospital researchers together, enhancing Norway’s international competitiveness in the life sciences.

I am proud of all we have achieved together and look forward to continuing this journey with our staff, trainees and students.

I hope you enjoy this digital version of our Annual Report and find our activities and initiatives interesting and inspiring.

With warm regards,

Janna Saarela

Director, NCMM

”

2024 laid a strong foundation. As NCMBM, we move forward with a broader scope and a shared commitment to scientific excellence.

**Janna Saarela,
Director, NCMBM**



Address from the Chair of the Board



We pass the baton with pride, confident that the path of scientific excellence and collaboration will carry forward.

Jens Petter Berg,
Former Chair of the Board, NCMM



Dear colleagues, partners, and esteemed members of our scientific community,

As my tenure as Chair of the Board for the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Medicine (NCMM) concludes on 1 January 2025, it has been a great privilege to serve this exceptional research centre. On behalf of the entire outgoing Board, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our group leaders, researchers, students, and staff for their dedication and excellence over the years.

Looking back on 2024, I am proud of how far we have come. The Centre has maintained its high standards of scientific excellence, and it has been particularly gratifying to see NCMM's strong culture of collaboration flourish. Initiatives such as the Joint Postdoctoral Programme and the launch of NORPOD (joint postdoc programme across the Nordic EMBL Partnership) have helped to catalyse new research partnerships both locally and across the Nordic region. A clear highlight of the year was NCMM hosting the 13th Nordic EMBL Partnership Meeting in Oslo—an event that underscored our international role and brought our vibrant research community together.

As we now prepare for NCMM's transition into the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Medicine (NCMBM), the reorganisation marks a pivotal step for the University of Oslo and the broader life science landscape in Norway. The expanded mandate reflects a strategic shift towards greater convergence across disciplines, stronger integration with clinical and translational research, and a continued commitment to addressing challenges spanning from cellular mechanisms to human and environmental health.

I am confident that the incoming Board, chaired by the Dean of Research and Innovation at the Faculty of Medicine, will continue to guide The Centre with purpose and ambition. The upcoming move to the new Life Science Building in 2026 represents more than just a change of address—it will provide the infrastructure and environment to foster deeper interdisciplinary exchange and innovation.

Although my time as Chair is ending, my belief in the Centre's mission remains steadfast. This transition is not a conclusion, but a natural evolution—building on the strong foundation we have laid together. I look forward to seeing NCMBM thrive and lead in shaping the future of molecular biosciences and medicine in Norway and beyond.

Warm regards,

Jens P. Berg, Prof., MD, PhD Outgoing Chair of the Board, NCMM March 2025

Our Community



Research Groups

2024 was a highly productive year for NCMM. Our research groups continued to make significant strides across diverse areas of molecular and biomedical sciences, ranging from fundamental discovery to translational and computational research. The Centre maintained a strong track record of high-quality publications, secured competitive funding, and expanded its involvement in national and international collaborative projects. These efforts collectively reinforce NCMM's position as a leading hub for innovative life science research in Norway. To learn more about the breadth and depth of our scientific endeavours, please explore the individual group pages on our website.

From NCMM to IMB: Nikolina Sekulic, A Home-Grown Success

After nine years of impactful leadership at NCMM, Dr. Nikolina Sekulic transitioned to her new role as Associate Professor of Medicine at the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences (IMB), Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo, in November 2024. Her move marked a key milestone in NCMM's mission to seed excellent researchers into the wider university environment.

At NCMM, Nikolina led the Structural Biology and Chromatin Group, using advanced biophysical methods to investigate centromere function, chromosome segregation, and epigenetic regulation. Her research included structural studies of CENP-A and Aurora B kinase activation, with key findings published in *eLife* and presented at the 2024 EMBO Dynamic Kinetochore Workshop. Her group also contributed to collaborative work on genetic causes of neurodevelopmental disorders and explored cancer-relevant antibody characterisation using HDX-MS.

Beyond the lab, she co-organised the 2023 symposium "CryoEM and CryoET: From Knowledge to Cures" and led the HALRIC project in Norway.

Nikolina's appointment at IMB is a clear example of NCMM's long-term impact: cultivating outstanding scientists and embedding them within the broader academic landscape in Norway. We look forward to continued collaboration with her in the years ahead.

NCMM to iCAN: A New Chapter for Marieke Kuijjer

Marieke Kuijjer, who joined NCMM in 2018 as the leader of the Computational Biology and Systems Medicine Group, embarked on a new journey in early 2025. She accepted a position as Associate Professor in Cancer Data Science with iCAN – Digital Precision Cancer Medicine at the University of Helsinki, while continuing part-time involvement with the Centre.

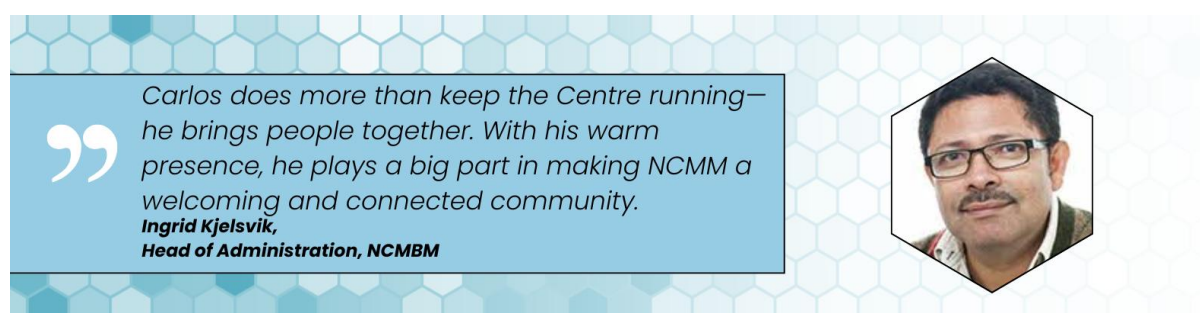
At NCMM, Marieke and her team built a cutting-edge research programme focused on integrating multi-omics data with patient-specific gene regulatory networks. Their work on network-based

models has helped predict cancer outcomes more accurately and has benefited from a highly collaborative, cross-disciplinary environment at NCMM

Her move to iCAN emphasises the Centre's mission by enabling outstanding researchers to get promoted into leading roles across the Nordic academic landscape, while maintaining strong ties with NCMM. We're proud that Marieke remains part of our community as she expands her impact at the University of Helsinki.

Recognising Outstanding Contribution: Heart of the Organisation Award

Carlos Rodriguez was honoured with NCMM's inaugural Heart of the Organisation Award in recognition of his outstanding commitment to fostering collaboration and strengthening connections among Centre members. His contributions have been vital in enhancing the sense of community at NCMM.



NCMM Trainee Committee Activities in 2024

The NCMM Trainee Committee represents PhD students, master's students and postdoctoral researchers, with a focus on promoting trainee engagement, well-being and professional development. In 2024, the committee organised activities to foster community and collaboration, including a Halloween-themed pumpkin carving event that brought together trainees from across research groups for networking and team building. The Trainee Committee also co-hosted a patient engagement workshop, which is described in more detail later in this report.

Welcome

Welcome to Elizabeth Smethurst – In February 2024, Elizabeth joined the administrative team at NCMM as the Head of Research Strategy, Communication and International Relations. She brings extensive experience from the UK higher education and charity sectors and will support the Centre's strategic development, external communication, and international collaboration efforts. Her appointment marks an exciting step forward in strengthening the Centre's profile and partnerships.

Marie Goua joins the Centre the Senior Adviser. With a strong academic background, including previous roles as Academic Strategic Lead in Biological Sciences at Robert Gordon University in Scotland, Marie supports the Centre's strategic operations and contributes to internal and external advisory work. Her expertise and collaborative insight ensure NCMM's administrative excellence on both institutional and international fronts. Marie's appointment brings fresh energy

and continuity to NCMM's advisory and planning capacity, helping to advance its strategic ambitions.

Additional new starters included:

- Pascal Oberbach, Lorenzo Martini, Hanxuan Sheng, Chi Xu, Jiahao Guo, Camille Roumieux, Ine Bonthuis, Pia Ahnstrøm, Cecilia Fahlquist-Hagert, Ane Gaupseth Mæstad, Sanne Lurås, Francisca Hinrichsen, Eirik Høye, Divyesh Patel, Jagoda Szponar, Damla Övek Baydar, Siep van Amsterdam, Anniken Solveig Matheson Sollano, Patricio Lopez Sánchez, Mario Hervás, Sara Palomino Echeverría, Adnan Hashim, Paris Shahrouzi, and Ekin Kaya.

Goodbye

Farewell to Nikoline L. Rasmussen – In early 2024, Nikoline L. Rasmussen stepped down from her role as Communications Officer at NCMM to take on a new challenge as a postdoctoral researcher in the Laboratory of Adaptive Immunity and Homeostasis at Rikshospitalet, led by Jan Terje Andersen. Her research now focuses on optimising antibody-based therapies for cancer. Nikoline was a valued colleague whose creativity and commitment left a lasting mark on the Centre's communication efforts. We thank her for her contributions and wish her every success in her scientific career.



Alumni spotlight

Ian Mills Returns to NCMM

In December 2024, NCMM was delighted to welcome back Professor Ian Mills—longtime alum and a former group leader from 2010 to 2015—for our International Seminar Series. Now based at the University of Oxford in the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, he leads the Oxford Prostate Cancer Biology Group.

Ian's seminar shone a spotlight on his cutting-edge work in prostate cancer evolution, metabolism, and treatment resistance. His presentation sparked lively discussion with current NCMM staff and brought back memories of the collaborative research culture at the Centre.

Reflecting on his NCMM years, Ian credited that era for helping shape his interdisciplinary approach:



NCMM gave me the opportunity to build something new in an exciting, international research setting. It was a formative time in my career that continues to shape how I work today.

Ian Mills,
Professor, University of Oxford
NCMM alum



His return shows what it means to be part of the NCMM alumni network: a launchpad for advancing science globally, while maintaining a strong bond with your roots. Ian's journey from Oslo to Oxford shows that NCMM alumni continue to make waves across Europe and beyond.

We're incredibly proud to count Ian among our community and look forward to more inspiring alumni visits in the future.

Prizes and Celebration



Celebrating Excellence: Marieke Kuijjer Wins Familien Blix' Fond Research Prize

Dr. Marieke Kuijjer, Group Leader for Computational Biology and Systems Medicine at NCMM, was honoured with the prestigious Familien Blix' Fond Research Prize for 2024 in recognition of her outstanding contributions to cancer research.

The prize funding will support her innovative work developing predictors of drug response and clinical outcomes based on single-cell gene regulatory network models. This research exemplifies Marieke's commitment to pushing the boundaries of precision medicine and computational biology.

This award highlights Marieke's status as a leading figure in cancer research and demonstrates NCMM's success in fostering exceptional scientific talent.

Celebrating Our 2024 PhD Graduates

In 2024, NCMM proudly celebrated the successful defence of six PhD theses by students affiliated with the Centre and its extended research environment. These talented early-career scientists have made important contributions to fields ranging from gene regulation and rare disease research to origin-of-life chemistry. We commend them for their hard work, creativity, and perseverance, and warmly congratulate them on achieving this major academic milestone.

PhD Defences in 2024:

Dr Flore Kersten

Thesis: A double-edged sword. AB toxins as attack (cholera toxin) and defense (CCTX2) mechanisms

Supervisors: Ute Krengel and Gabriele Cordara, Department of Chemistry, UiO

Defended: February 2024

Dr Rafael Riudavets Puig

Thesis: Deciphering transcriptional regulation and its role in cancer

Supervisor: Anthony Mathelier, and Eivind Hovig, Department of Informatics, UiO

Defended: February 2024

Dr Lin Xue

Thesis: Communication and interaction among surface-adhered membranous protocells

Supervisors: Michele Cascella and Reidar Lund. Department of Chemistry, UiO

Defended: April 2024

Dr Ieva Rauluševičiūtė

Thesis: Computational Approaches to Exploring Transcription Factor-DNA Interactions: From Resource Development to Co-binding Prediction

Supervisors: Anthony Mathelier, and Jonas Paulsen, Department of Biosciences, UiO

Defended: October 2024

Dr Ping-Han Hsieh

Thesis: Developing Computational Methods to Improve Gene Regulatory Network Inference

Supervisors: Marieke Kuijjer, and Geir Kjetil Ferkingstad Sandve, Department of Informatics, UiO.

Defended: October 2024

Dr Johanna Lehtonen

Thesis: Genetic and Functional Studies of Ultra-Rare Diseases

Supervisors: Janna Saarela, Katarina Pelin, and Vilma-Lotta Lehtokari, University of Helsinki,

Defended: November 2024 (jointly at FIMM and NCMM)

We are incredibly proud of our graduates' achievements and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Their work continues to shape the future of molecular biosciences and medicine.

Celebrating Our Master's Graduates

In addition to our PhD candidates, 2024 saw the successful defence of Master of Science theses by two talented students affiliated with NCMM. We're proud to celebrate their hard work and excellent achievements:

- **Adrian Engberg**, from Charlotte Boccara's group, defended his thesis titled "Effect on adolescent sleep of prenatal exposure to antidepressor" at the University of Copenhagen.
- **Sanne Lurås**, from Janna Saarela's group, defended her thesis titled "Deciphering ADA2 Deficiency: Creating an adenosine deaminase deficiency model with CRISPR/Cas genome editing", showcasing innovative approaches to modelling rare disease mechanisms.

Congratulations to our students!



Top, L-R: Flore Kersten, Rafael Riudavets Puig, Lin Xue.

Middle, L-R: Ieva Rauluševičiūtė, Ping-Han Hsieh.

Bottom, L-R: Johanna Lehtonen, Adrian Engberg, Sanne Lurås.

Looking Ahead



NCMBM: New Name and an Evolving Mission

From 1 January 2025, the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Medicine (NCMM) will be renamed the Norwegian Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Medicine (NCMBM). This change reflects the Centre's evolving mission to foster greater collaboration across academic environments at the University of Oslo.

NCMBM will continue to support excellent research in molecular medicine and biosciences, with a strong focus on interdisciplinary work and the development of new technologies. Its research will span from detailed cellular mechanisms to broader challenges in human health.

As part of the Nordic EMBL Partnership for Molecular Medicine, NCMBM will align its scientific strategy with EMBL's "Molecules to Ecosystems" framework to remain at the forefront of the field.

A new board, to be chaired by the Research Dean of the Medical Faculty, will oversee strategic goals, budgeting, staffing, and group leader recruitment — ensuring NCMBM's continued growth and success in the years ahead.

We warmly welcome this new development and look forward to the many opportunities it will bring for collaboration, innovation, and scientific excellence.

NCMM's Exciting Move to the Life Science Building in 2026

NCMM is set to relocate to its new home in the Life Science Building (LSB) in 2026—a major milestone for the University of Oslo and the Centre itself. This move is a strategic priority for UiO, designed to enhance both cutting-edge research and interdisciplinary synergies in the life sciences.

The LSB will bring together leading university and hospital units within life sciences, fostering close collaboration and synergy among top researchers at NCMM, UiO, Oslo University Hospital, and other key partners. This co-location is expected to accelerate scientific breakthroughs through greater interdisciplinary interaction and shared resources.

Recently, NCMM members toured the LSB, impressed by the building's progress and eagerly anticipating the spectacular views from the 7th floor. The move promises a vibrant new environment that will inspire and support the next generation of life science discoveries at UiO.

Visiting the new Life Science Building



L-R: Janna Saarela, Dina Ruud Aronsen, Elizabeth Smethurst, Ingrid Kjelsvik, Rasma Gutsmitte, Sissel Eikvar, Monika Szymanska.

Events



NCMM Hosts Workshop to Champion Patient Engagement in Research

In August 2024, NCMM—represented by its Trainee Committee—joined forces with EATRIS Norway to host a dedicated Patient Engagement Workshop. The event aimed to raise awareness among research scientists about the vital role patients play when involved early in the research process.

Participants explored how meaningful patient collaboration can improve research relevance, design, and outcomes, helping bridge the gap between scientific discovery and real-world impact. The workshop highlighted practical strategies for researchers to engage patients effectively, fostering a more inclusive and patient-centred approach to science.

This initiative reflects NCMM's commitment to ensuring that research not only advances knowledge but also addresses the needs and perspectives of those it ultimately serves.

NCMM Hosts the 13th Nordic EMBL Partnership Conference in Oslo

From 16 to 19 September 2024, NCMM proudly hosted the 13th Nordic EMBL (European Molecular Biology Laboratory) Partnership for Molecular Medicine meeting at Litteraturhuset in Oslo. This major event brought together over 160 researchers, group leaders, and collaborators from across the Nordic countries and beyond, providing a dynamic forum for scientific networking, knowledge exchange, and fostering new collaborations.

The Nordic EMBL Partnership is a unique and influential network dedicated to driving excellence in molecular medicine research. It serves as a nurturing ground for early-career scientists and promotes strong collaborative ties within the Nordic region. This year's conference built on the momentum of the 10-year renewal of the Nordic EMBL Partnership agreement, signed in May 2023, which reaffirmed the commitment to cross-Nordic cooperation and strengthening connections with EMBL and its global partnerships.

Over four days, participants engaged in inspiring keynote talks, scientific sessions, and interactive discussions covering cutting-edge advances in molecular biology and medicine. The meeting highlighted the collaborative spirit that defines the partnership and showcased NCMM's role as a key hub in this vibrant research community.

As a flagship event for NCMM and the Nordic EMBL Partnership, the conference celebrated a decade of partnership and set the stage for future innovation and collaboration, reinforcing the Centre's position at the forefront of molecular biosciences in the Nordic region.

Nordic EMBL Partnership Conference in Oslo



NCMM Annual Scientific Retreat 2024: Two Days of Science and Collaboration

On 3–4 June 2024, NCMM staff, students, and Associate Investigators gathered for the Annual Scientific Retreat at Oscarsborg, nestled in the beautiful Oslo fjord. Building on the tradition of previous years, this two-day event offered a dedicated space for scientific presentations, discussions, and networking.

The retreat reinforced NCMM's strong commitment to fostering a collaborative and supportive research community. By bringing together researchers from across the Centre and its network, the event encouraged knowledge exchange, fresh ideas, and strengthened connections.

Such retreats play an important role in promoting teamwork and innovation at NCMM, helping to drive cutting-edge research in molecular biosciences and medicine.

Facilities and Networks



HTS Core Facility: Strengthening Expertise and European Collaboration

In 2024, NCMM's High-Throughput Screening (HTS) core facility welcomed Tamjidmaa Khatanbaatar as head engineer. Since April, she has supported customer projects and compound screening activities across a range of biological samples.

The facility also contributed to the launch of the IMPULSE project—an EU initiative aimed at consolidating research infrastructures and advancing high-throughput screening capabilities. As leader of NOR-Openscreen and partner in EU-Openscreen, NCMM's HTS team, together with BiSS at UiB, will help drive innovation in chemical screening and public-private collaboration across Europe.

Zebrafish Core Facility: Bridging Research and Patient Engagement

In November 2024, the Zebrafish Core Facility welcomed Lone Jelva Hansen, co-founder of the Association for Rare Neurodevelopmental Disorders, for a visit with Camila Esguerra's research team. During the tour, Lone gained firsthand insight into the zebrafish models used to study the *stxbp1* gene, implicated in developmental and epileptic encephalopathy (DEE), a condition affecting her son. This visit highlighted the value of close collaboration between researchers and patient communities to better understand disease symptoms and advance translational research.



It is important to meet the researchers involved, as it makes it easier to discuss all aspects of the diseases.

Lone Jelva Hansen,
Co-founder,
Association for Rare Neurodevelopmental Disorders



EATRIS in 2024: Driving Translational Medicine through Collaboration and Innovation

Throughout 2024, NCMM remained actively engaged with EATRIS, the European infrastructure for translational medicine. A major highlight was the launch of the EATRIS-CONNECT project on 1 May 2024—an EU-funded, €3.9 million Horizon Europe initiative aiming to accelerate translational research through digital transformation. NCMM's Janna Saarela, Anthony Mathelier, and Anita Kavlie joined the kick-off meeting, with Anita later pitching the project at Science Impact 2024 as one of three EU initiatives exploring AI in clinical decision-making.

The year also saw strong outreach efforts. In April, EATRIS Norway and Sweden showcased collaborative opportunities at the Regenerative Medicine meeting in Bergen, while in October, Anita introduced EATRIS services to the K.G. Jebsen Academy of Young Researchers, with a focus on strengthening ERC Synergy grant applications.

Training remained central to EATRIS's mission: the flagship TMex (Translational Medicine Explained) course for early-career researchers ran in Barcelona in October, and a November workshop on gene therapy in Leuven was attended by NCMM PhD student Frida Høsøien Haugen. EATRIS also hosted an Expert Centres webinar in September focused on EU proposal development.

Finally, at the biannual Board of National Directors meeting in Madrid, Janna and Anita contributed to discussions on EU funding, platform developments, and the role of generative AI in shaping the future of translational medicine.

Collaboration



NCMM and Nordic EMBL Partners Advance Collaboration through NORPOD Fellowships

The Nordic EMBL partnership for Molecular Medicine proudly secured funding from NordForsk to support the NORPOD joint-postdoctoral programme. This initiative is designed to boost cross-border collaboration in molecular medicine by fostering joint projects that address critical research challenges.

Two NORPOD fellowships were awarded this year, including to Dr. Sara Echeverria Palomino, who is jointly hosted by NCMM and FIMM in Finland. Sara's project focuses on developing computational models to understand gene regulatory networks in cancer, aiming to identify novel therapeutic targets. Her work exemplifies the programme's commitment to innovative, cross-disciplinary research that bridges biology, data science, and medicine.

The NORPOD programme builds a strong Nordic community of early-career researchers, promoting skill development and research excellence across the partnership's four sites. It nurtures future scientific leaders by supporting mentorship and collaborative projects in molecular medicine.

With a focus on translational research in precision and personalised medicine, NORPOD aims to accelerate healthcare innovation — connecting clinic, research, and industry for improved human health outcomes.

Applications reopen in 2025 for the remaining NORPOD postdoctoral positions, offering exciting opportunities for researchers eager to work at the forefront of molecular medicine across the Nordic countries.



New Joint Postdoctoral Projects Launched to Foster Cross-Institutional Collaboration

To stimulate fresh collaborations within the Oslo life science community, NCMM launched the Joint Postdoctoral Programme in Molecular Life Science in 2024. The scheme supports joint postdoctoral supervision between NCMM group leaders and external partners with whom they have not collaborated on publications or grants within the past five years. NCMM funds the first year of each project, while the partner institution funds the second. Following a competitive selection process, seven projects have now been awarded funding, covering a broad range of biomedical research areas.

Funded projects and participating principal investigators (PIs):

Integrative modelling and single-cell analysis of pancreatic lineage-specific transcription factors in pancreatic cancer treatment resistance

- Dr Biswajyoti Sahu – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Prof Tero Aittokallio – Institute for Cancer Research, Oslo University Hospital

Mechanisms of epileptogenesis after traumatic brain injury: The search for new therapeutic strategies

- Dr Camila Esguerra – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Prof Erik Taubøll – Department of Neurology, Oslo University Hospital

CRÊPE: Cis-regulatory elements for prostate carcinogenesis

- Dr Anthony Mathelier – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Dr Alfonso Urbanucci – Institute for Cancer Research, Oslo University Hospital

Gene regulatory networks of tumour heterogeneity and metastatic progression in colorectal cancer

- Dr Marieke Kuijjer – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Dr Anita Sveen – Institute for Cancer Research, Oslo University Hospital

Autophagy as a phylogenetically conserved mediator of sleep benefits

- Dr Charlotte Boccara – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Dr Helene Knævelsrud – Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Oslo

Non-invasive assessment of placental function & gene correction for inborn blood diseases

- Dr Emma Haapaniemi – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Dr Trond Melbye Michelsen – Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Oslo University Hospital

Improved analysis tools for identifying functional and clinically relevant transcript isoforms from short and long-read RNA data

- Prof Janna Saarela – NCMM, University of Oslo
- Prof Dag Undlien – Department of Medical Genetics, Oslo University Hospital

These projects reflect NCMM's commitment to interdisciplinary research and building new collaborative bridges that push the boundaries of molecular medicine.

Oslo joint-postdoc scheme: Participating PIs



Row 1, L-R: Biswa Sahu, Tero Aittokallio, Camila Esguerra.
Row 2, L-R: Erik Taubøll, Anthony Mathelier, Alfonso Urbanucci, Marieke Kuijjer.
Row 3, L-R: Anita Sveen, Charlotte Boccara, Helene Knævelsrud.
Row 4, L-R: Emma Haapaniemi, Trond Melbye Michelsen, Janna Saarela, Dag Undlien.

ATMP Norway Infrastructure Award

In 2024, the ATMP Norway initiative, a multi-nodal infrastructure for Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs), was awarded 74.2 million NOK in funding from the Research Council of Norway (NFR). Led by Oslo University Hospital, the collaborative project aims to accelerate the development and clinical translation of regenerative medicine and cell-based therapies across Norway.

As one of the partners, NCMM contributes scientific expertise and infrastructure support, particularly through its involvement in EATRIS. NCMM Director Janna Saarela and Anita Kavlie, EATRIS Norway coordinator, are engaged in the initiative and help strengthen its links to national and international networks.

Leveraging NCMM's cutting-edge expertise in translational research, advanced technologies, and collaborative networks, the Centre contributes critical scientific insight and infrastructure support. Through its partnership with EATRIS, NCMM enhances the initiative's capacity to drive innovation and strengthen Norway's position as a leading hub for advanced therapeutic research and development.