

Board, Centre for Molecular Medicine Norway (NCMM)

Oslo, 27 October 2021

Minutes from Board Meeting 27 October 2021

Time: Wednesday 27 October, 12:00-14:30
 Place: Oslo Science Park, Room Aqua and Zoom

Executive officer: Elisa Bjørge

	Present	Absent
Professor Jens Petter Berg (UiO/OUS), Chair	X	
Professor Arne Klungland (UiO), member	X	
Professor Hilde Nilsen (UiO), member	X	
Professor Bente Halvorsen (HSØ), member	X	
Director Research & Innovation Øystein Krüger (HSØ), member	X	
Professor Ola Myklebost (UiB), national member	X	
Professor Magne Børset (NTNU), national deputy member		X
Dr. Torunn Berge (HSØ), deputy member		X
Professor Arnaldo Frigessi, deputy member		X
Professor Janna Saarela (NCMM), Director	X	

CAO Ingrid Kjelsvik was also present.

Agenda (O = information item, D = discussion item B = decision item)

Case 34-21B Approval of minutes from last Board meeting

Draft minutes from the Board meeting on September 10 were available.

Decision: The minutes were approved.

Case 35-21B Recruitment of new NCMM group leaders – update

NCMM is in the process of recruiting 2-3 new group leaders within the field of precision medicine. The call was published in June, and when the call closed on September 15, 59 applications had been received. Candidates with PhD degrees older than 10 years were considered to be at a career stage not compatible with hiring to these positions, and after a pre-screening performed by the Director and two NCMM group leaders, 24 applications were prioritized. The Evaluation Committee reviewed all of the candidates individually and in an online meeting October 26, the Committee discussed and ranked the candidates. It was decided to invite ten candidates for interviews in Oslo on November 22-23.

NCMM in the call opened up to recruit 2-3 principal investigators with start-up packages in precision medicine. In particular, NCMM is looking for candidates within AI/machine learning as well as within cell-based approaches. After the evaluation of

all the applicants, the Evaluation Committee concluded that the quality of the applications for the AI/machine learning position was not good enough, and NCMM will therefore open a new call early 2022, to recruit a group leader with AI/machine learning expertise. The Centre will therefore now only consider recruiting 1-2 group leaders from the ten candidates invited for interviews.

NCMM will prepare detailed itineraries for each of the invited candidates. In addition to the interview and a public talk on November 22-23, the candidates will also have one-on-one interactions with NCMM group leaders and other researchers both in the Oslo region as well as nationally, if there are joint research interests. The Board received the applicants' CVs and are invited to identify potential collaborators that the candidates can meet during their stay here.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 36-21O NCMM Associate Investigator seed-funding

The NCMM Director has previously been authorized to allocate some strategic funds annually and the Centre also has a budget allocation for national activities every year. A call for seed funding of new collaborative projects opened in June. The application deadline was 31 August and NCMM received altogether 20 applications. The total amount of funding applied is almost twice the amount earmarked for this. The NCMM Director together with NCMM group leader Sandra Lopez-Aviles and Prof. Lars Eide (OUH/UiO) have evaluated the applications. Altogether, 6.7 mNOK has been allocated to 11 new collaborative projects. The NCMM Director declared a CoI for one of the applications where she is a partner, and this application was evaluated and allocation decided by the other committee members.

In the meeting it was discussed how NCMM in the future can make this mechanism truly national in regards of receiving more applications from Associate Investigators outside the Oslo region. In future calls it should also be considered to specify that the suggested projects and collaboration partners should be new constellations and not new projects proposed by already existing collaboration partners. Furthermore, it was suggested that each Associate Investigator in the future can only submit one application to a seed-funding call.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 37-21D Future assistant director role

NCMM invited the Board to discuss how to best fill the assistant director role in the future. Initial discussions have already taken place with the NCMM SAB. During these discussions, several areas for prioritized tasks were identified: facilitating

connections with hospitals/clinicians, contribute in strategic discussions and help with coordination / networking in relation to the upcoming move to the new Life Science building as well as bringing in some novel expertise and technology. The NCMM Director will also discuss the matter with the group leaders in their strategy seminar on November and hope to learn more about what the group leaders think will be most helpful going forward.

The NCMM Director in the meeting suggested two possible ways forward. One option is to recruit a senior researcher to NCMM as a Research Director. This person would then take responsibility for internal NCMM matters and a.o. help with mentoring of group leaders. Alternatively, one can try to identify several people already working on the hospital and/or university side and offer them part-time positions at NCMM to help fill different roles. It might also be possible to combine these suggestions. The NCMM Director still needs to discuss the matter further before concluding on the best way forward.

The Board wishes to support the Director once she has decided on which functions are most important to cover and a more concrete plan is suggested.

Case 38-210 Overview of NCMM's finances

In the meeting, CAO Ingrid Kjelsvik gave a short presentation about NCMM's finances and the challenges that have arisen due to the introduction of a new accounting and financial system (BOTT) in May. It has been extra challenging to change systems in the middle of the year as the numbers from the old and new system do not match. Furthermore, the reporting tools in the new system are currently not satisfactory. Thus, it is difficult to get a complete and detailed picture of the financial situation at the moment. This is not only a NCMM problem but is a challenge all institutes are currently dealing with.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, NCMM has not been able to spend as much funding as originally budgeted (reduced activities, travels and investments). NCMM has built up a significant surplus; 1/3 of this surplus is on a Centre level whereas 2/3 are unspent funding already allocated and earmarked to the research groups. This surplus is, however, necessary to be able to fulfill obligations in relation to already employed group leaders, equipment investments and planned start-ups of new groups over the coming years.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 39-210 Life Science Building – update

The building of the new Life Science Building is significantly delayed but new funding of the project was secured on the latest State Budget. As a result of the partnership between UiO and OUH, the new building will be somewhat bigger than originally planned and the budget for the building is now 10.4 billion kroner. The total costs of the project are estimated to 12 billion kroner. In addition to detail planning of lab areas,

office solutions are currently being discussed within the project. NCMM is currently in the process of planning the lab areas in detail, including placing instrumentation to each room and making sure the labs will be as functional as possible. Liv Bjørland, previously heavily involved in this project and now retired, is helping in this process.

NCMM is currently located in Forskningsparken, where the UiO Property Department is renting space for the Centre. The current lease agreement runs until the end of 2026. With the building delays, the new Life Science building will most likely not be ready until 2027-2028, and NCMM is worried about what will happen if the current lease at Forskningsparken is not extended.

Decision: The Board took note of the briefing.

Case 40-21 **Miscellaneous**

Admission to PhD programs at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MN)

NCMM group leaders have since the Centre was established had the freedom to use PhD programs at both MED and MN, depending on where each project would fit best, free of charge. Currently, most NCMM PhD students are enrolled at PhD programs at MN (IBV, Chemistry, Pharmacy and Informatics).

One group leader is in the process of enrolling a new PhD student at the Department of Informatics and was recently asked to cover recidency and administrative costs for this student, as the new policy is to charge these costs for students outside the MN Faculty. NCMM contacted the Faculty management to find out if this is a new Faculty policy, but this turned out to be the new policy of the Department of Informatics (IFI). After some discussions, IFI has decided not to implement this new policy for the time being. However, we have been informed that the Faculty is working on a new guideline that will apply to all institutes at MN in the future.

Sincerely,

Jens Petter Berg
Chair NCMM Board

Janna Saarela
NCMM Director