

Some background information

Research expertise: cell biology, skin, adult stem cells, human iPS cells

Research funder: Executive Chair, UK Medical Research Council, 2018-2022

Research organisation: EMBO Director, 2022





EVALUATION REPORT OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH (INSERM)

Report on 2016-2020 and 2025 strategic plan

Evaluation committee

Fiona Watt (President), King's College London

Jacques Samarut (Vice-President), Université de Lyon

Vanessa Dumétier, Human Resources Director of INRIA

Jeroen Geurts, President, Netherlands Institute for Health Research & Development (ZonMw)

Jean-Luc Moullet, Chief Innovation Officer of CNRS

Sébastien Ourselin, King's College London

Jill Pell, University of Glasgow

Context of the evaluation

- Relationship with government, other funders, and the research community
- How does INSERM establish research priorities?
- INSERM governance and management
- INSERM support for talent: assessment, recruitment, retention, career development
- Valorisation strategy: incentives, start-ups, private/public partnerships
- Communication with all INSERM stakeholders

Summary of our findings: administration

INSERM's mission concerns fundamental research and clinical research

Many partnerships at European and international level

INSERM is an efficient and well-run organisation

Staggered terms of appointment for members of the scientific council will improve continuity

Strategic planning with the Ministry of Health (e.g to develop a long-term public health strategy) could be improved

Annual funding makes programming over five years difficult

The role of AVIESAN (Alliance for Life Sciences and Health) needs to be clarified – a 'one-stop-shop' for partners

interested in participating in European research infrastructures would be useful

Further development of interdisciplinary research in partnership with CNRS is encouraged

Increased investment in digitalisation of HR, finances and in science data management is recommended

Summary of our findings: researchers

Links with CHUs (University hospitals) could be strengthened, for example in the management of patient cohorts

INSERM researchers should be encouraged to participate more actively in teaching and contributing to such community activities should be included in the promotion criteria

The ITA (support staff) are an important feature of INSERM and should be supported more strongly

Actions to attract a greater number of young talents in both fundamental and clinical research are required

Internal communication, particularly on INSERM evaluations, can be improved (Scientific Council and Specialized Scientific Committees)

Low salaries make it hard to recruit medical doctors to INSERM; medical doctors are required to strengthen INSERM's actions in e.g Public Health; more protected research time for clinicians would be beneficial

More training in management methods for joint unit heads is recommended

Public and patient involvement in research needs to be strengthened

Summary of our findings: exploitation of intellectual property

There are a large number of patents and start-ups in the pharmaceutical and medical fields

INSERM's links are more effective with SMEs than with large pharmaceutical companies

The distribution of tasks between SATT and INSERM-Transfert needs to be clarified The use of specific tools is proposed by the committee to support researchers in the development process

Challenges that INSERM faces

Financial constraints, and a small strategic budget relative to pre-allocated budget

In 2020 INSERM's budget was €966 million, including 65 % of public subsidy and 35 % of external funding

Competition amongst research institutions for leadership in health research, particularly universities and research organizations – the national vision and coordination provided by INSERM is important for France's ambitions in medical and health research

Raising the visibility of INSERM with the public

Citizens appear to be losing trust in science, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis



Thank you

Giles Bloch and all the staff at INSERM

The Hcéres team

The review committee

Everyone we interviewed