

Bedside to bench and back: The pivotal role of translational medicine ^[1]

Discovery ^[2]

Stephan Gadola is one of many accomplished clinicians with strong biological research backgrounds who are being tempted into translational research. Working at the intersection of basic lab science and clinical application allows them to utilize their dual experience to develop new therapies.

Video of Bedside to bench and back

Following medical school in his native Switzerland, Gadola spent six years in the clinic, including two years in immunology. He then embarked on research at the Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine at the University of Oxford. After gaining his PhD, he went back to patients, combining clinical work with laboratory research in immunology, first in Switzerland and later as a consultant rheumatologist and Professor of Immunology at one of the UK's large teaching hospitals. Then in 2013 came the move to industry as Gadola joined the Translational Medicine group at the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research (NIBR).

Gadola is still able to pursue his passion for hands-on patient care by running a rheumatology clinic once a week.

In his role as translational medicine expert in autoimmunity, Gadola is involved at the earliest stages of drug discovery when he helps identify new drug targets and new compounds or biological drugs. He then applies his deep knowledge of patients' medical needs and disease pathways to design small-scale clinical trials in which investigational treatments are tested in patients for the first time. These 'proof-of-concept' studies provide an early read on a drug's safety and effectiveness and are vital to advancing the most promising drug candidates.

Despite having only a vague idea of what translational medicine was all about when first approached by NIBR, Gadola says his career change has proved to be the "right decision". He is relishing the chance to combine his experience in clinical practice and in academic research to advance the understanding of complex inflammatory diseases and change how they are treated. At the same time, he is still able to pursue his passion for hands-on patient care by running a rheumatology clinic once a week.

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Links

[1] <https://www.novartis.com/stories/discovery/bedside-bench-and-back-pivotal-role-translational-medicine>

[2] <https://www.novartis.com/stories/discovery>

[3] <https://www.novartis.com/tags/drug-discovery>

[4] <https://www.novartis.com/tags/novartis-institutes-biomedical-research>

[5] <https://www.novartis.com/tags/careers>

[6] <https://www.novartis.com/tags/clinical-trials>