



Post Doctoral Training Fellow, Cancer Stem Cell Team (Prof Axel Behrens)

Candidate Information

July 2026

The Institute of Cancer Research

About the team

The Cancer Stem Cell team led by Professor Axel Behrens uses a combination of sophisticated genetics and human cancer organoids to understand the biology of cancer and to develop novel therapeutic options. Recent key discoveries of the Behrens team include identification of cancer stem cell populations in breast and pancreatic Cancer (Blaas et al., Nature Cell Biology 2016; Wang et al., Nature Cell Biology 2019), and the elucidation of mechanisms guiding tumour maintenance, tumour morphology and tumour cell fate (Messal et al., Nature 2019; Nelson et al., Nature Communications 2022; Lan et al., Nature, 2022). The successful candidate will work within a multidisciplinary team focussed on understanding fundamental mechanisms governing cancer stem cell function and apply this knowledge to develop cancer stem-cell based therapies. Our laboratories are fully equipped for cancer molecular biology and human cancer organoid tissue culture.

The Cancer Stem Cell team is part of The Breast Cancer Now Toby Robins Research Centre at the ICR, within the Division of Breast Cancer Research, this is the first centre in the UK entirely devoted to breast cancer research. Our goal is to advance research into the causes, diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.

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About the role

A Post Doctoral Training Fellow position is available in Cancer Stem Cell Laboratory. We are looking for a highly motivated and creative molecular biologist with a strong background in breast cancer biology. The goal of the project is to use advanced genetic cancer mouse models and patient-derived human cancer organoids, to apply their cancer biology skills to elucidate mechanisms of breast cancer stem cell biology and metastasis formation, with the ultimate aim to develop novel therapeutics.

This position is offered initially on a 3-year fixed term contract, with the possibility of extension. Starting salary is from £45,600pa.

In addition to annual performance related pay awards, the salary scales are reviewed annually to consider cost of living increases.

Annual leave entitlement is 28 days per annum. There is an additional entitlement to 8 bank/public holidays and 3 ICR-set privilege days.

The ICR has a workforce agreement stating that Postdoctoral Training Fellows can only be employed for up to 7 years as PDTF at the ICR, providing total postdoctoral experience (including previous employment at this level elsewhere) does not exceed 7 years.

About our organisation

The Institute of Cancer Research, London, is one of the world's most influential cancer research institutions with an outstanding track record of achievement dating back more than 100 years. Our mission is to make the discoveries that defeat cancer.

As well as being one of the UK's leading higher education institutions in research quality and impact, the ICR is consistently ranked as one of the world's most successful for industry collaboration. As a member institution of the University of London, we also provide postgraduate higher education of international distinction.

We are also a charity and rely on the support of partner organisations, funders, donors and the general public.

[Read more](#) to find out about our history, culture, and achievements, and how our funders, supporters and partnerships help drive our work.

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Our values

The ICR has a highly skilled and committed workforce, with a wide variety of roles, each requiring different skills. But whether you work as a researcher, or work as part of our corporate team, your work and behaviour is underpinned by these six values. They are what bring us together as one team - as 'One ICR'.



Pursuing excellence

We aspire to excellence in everything we do, and aim to be leaders in our field.



Acting with Integrity

We promote an open and honest environment that gives credit and acknowledges mistakes, so that our actions stand up to scrutiny.



Valuing all our people

We value the contribution of all our people, help them reach their full potential, and treat everyone with kindness and respect.



Working together

We collaborate with colleagues and partners to bring together different skills, resources and perspectives.



Leading innovation

We do things differently in ways that no one else has done before, and share the expertise and learning we gain.



Making a difference

We all play our part, doing a little bit more, a little bit better, to help improve the lives of people with cancer.



Our values set out how each of us at the ICR, works together to meet our mission – to make the discoveries that defeat cancer. They summarise our desired behaviours, attitudes and culture – how we value one another and how we take pride in the work we do, to deliver impact for people with cancer and their loved ones.”

Professor Kristian Helin
Chief Executive

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Job description	Department / division:	Breast Cancer Research
	Pay grade / staff group:	Post Doctoral Training Fellow
	Hours / duration:	Full time (35 hours per week), Monday to Friday. Fixed term contract for 3 years initially.
	Reports to:	Professor Axel Behrens
	Main purpose of the job:	Post-doctoral training in cancer biology

Duties and responsibilities:

Specific duties

To work semi-independently to develop the research plan
To interact with the Team Leader, other members of the group and collaborators to pursue the agreed program of work
To provide supervision of other staff and team activities as required by Team Leader
To maintain accurate records of experiments and reagent descriptions in laboratory notebooks
To take an interest in the relevant scientific literature
Strong interest in expanding expertise in in vivo imaging and transplantation technology

General duties

All staff must ensure that they familiarise themselves with and adhere to any ICR policies that are relevant to their work and that all personal and sensitive personal data is treated with the utmost confidentiality and in line with the General Data Protection Regulations
Any other duties that are consistent with the nature and grade of the post that may be required.
To work in accordance with the ICR's Values.
To promote a safe, healthy and fair environment for people to work, where bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

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Person specification

Education and Knowledge

Person Specification	Essential or Desirable?
PhD* or equivalent in molecular biology/biochemistry	Essential
Substantial research experience in breast cancer biology	Essential
Substantial experience in Crispr-Cas9 screening platforms	Essential
Substantial research experience in breast cancer organoid biology	Essential

****as a minimum requirement candidates must have submitted their thesis by the start date of their employment and awarded their PhD within the six month probationary period.***

Skills

Person Specification	Essential or Desirable?
Home Office Personal Licence	Essential
Extensive skills in in vivo imaging and animal surgery	Essential
High level of competence in ultrasound guided orthotopic transplantation	Essential
High level of competence in standard biochemical analysis techniques	Essential

Experience

Person specification	Essential or Desirable?
Considerable experience in cancer biology	Essential
Considerable experience in working with human patient-derived cancer organoids	Essential
Considerable experience in working with in vivo breast cancer models	Essential
Considerable experience in CRISPR modification of human patient-derived cancer organoids	Essential

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Benefits

We offer a fantastic working environment, great opportunities for career development and the chance to make a real difference to defeat cancer. We aim to recruit and develop the best – the most outstanding scientists and clinicians, and the most talented professional and administrative staff.

The annual leave entitlement for full time employees is 28 days per annum on joining. This will increase by a further day after 2 years' and 5 years' service.

Staff membership to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is available. The USS is a defined benefit scheme and provides a highly competitive pension scheme with robust benefits. The rate of contributions is determined by USS and details of the costs and benefits of this scheme can be found on their website. If staff are transferring from the NHS, they can opt to remain members of the NHS Pension Scheme.

We offer a range of family friendly benefits such as flexible working, a parents' group, and a maternity mentoring scheme. Other great benefits include interest free loans for discounted season tickets for travel and bicycle purchases, access to the NHS discounts website, a free and confidential Employee Assistance Programme which offers a range of well-being, financial and legal advice services, two staff restaurants, and access to a gym and sporting facilities at our Sutton site.

Further information

You may contact Ian Evans for further information by emailing Ian.Evans@icr.ac.uk. This job description is a reflection of the current position and is subject to review and alteration in detail and emphasis in the light of future changes or development.