

The Swiss MD-PhD association (SMPA): a way to bridge the gap between the bench and the patient's bed

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The complexity of basic medical science is rapidly growing. The high level of technologies applied in basic science demands specific and extensive training for researchers. This questions the “late-bloomer” pathway of clinicians that switch to basic research after their clinical training and begins to set researchers and clinicians apart. The weakening of the bridge between bench and bedside has led to the creation of MD-PhD programs, in Europe as well as in the US. MD-PhD programs should improve the efficiency of medical research by creating a seed for close collaboration between basic research and clinical sciences.

The Swiss MD-PhD association (SMPA) (<http://www.smpa.org>) is an organization of physician-scientists (MD-PhDs), which promotes scientific and personal cross-talks between clinicians and basic scientists. The SMPA is a

young association created in June 2003 and currently comprises around 70 physicians with an M.D.-Ph.D. education, M.D.-Ph.D. students and M.D. with a strong activity in research. The design of an optimal MD-PhD education and career planning for young physician-scientists is one of the main focus of interest of the society. In that respect, a close collaboration with the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS), the Swiss Medical Association (FMH) and other institutions has been established. Once a year, the SMPA organizes a general assembly embodied in a scientific meeting. The latter offers the opportunity to invite well known speakers, to engage scientific and political round table discussions and to bring clinicians and basic scientists in contact to promote translational and clinical research.