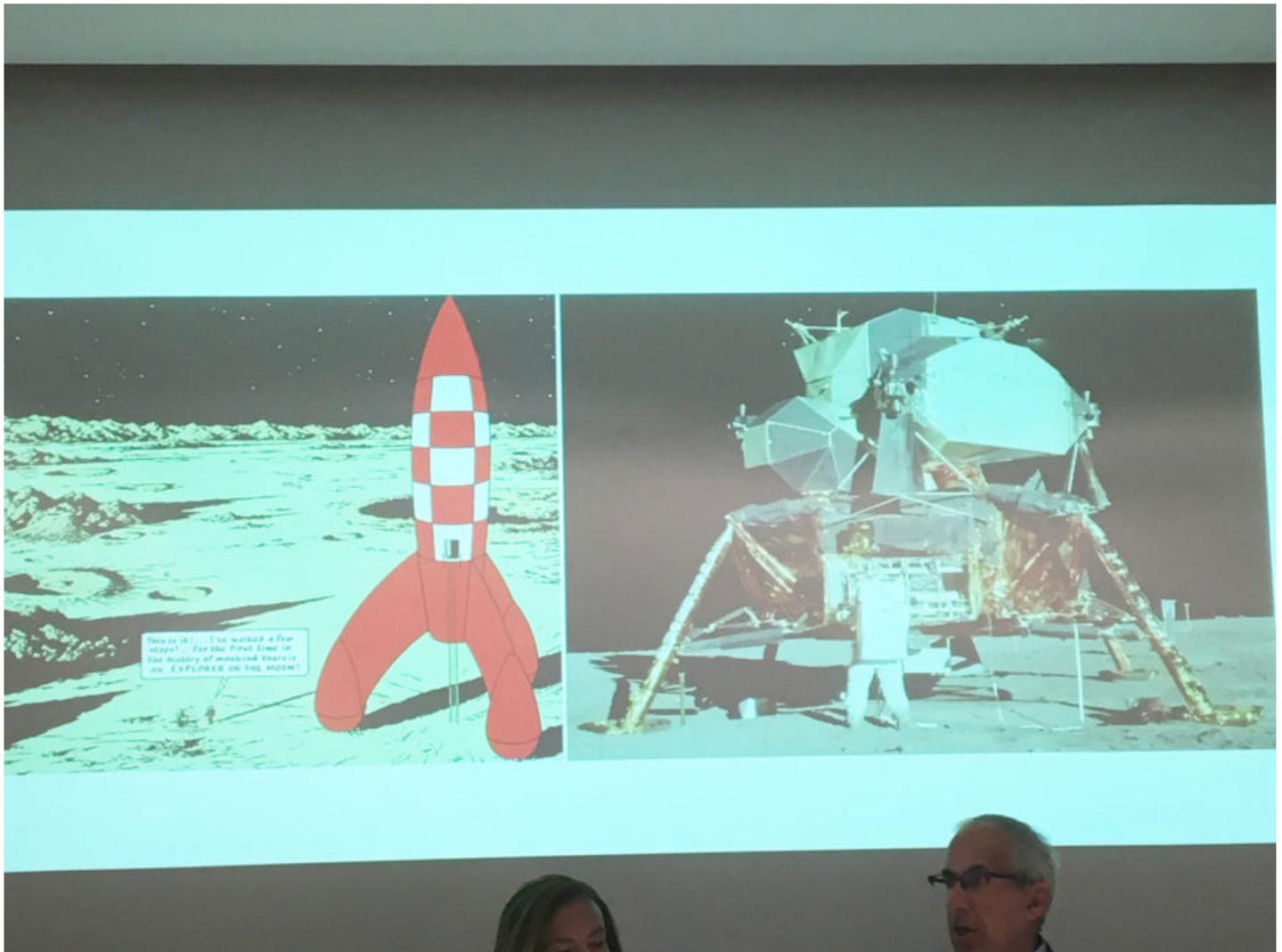


The challenges of cancer at SALSS

ANNELI HIDALGO ([HTTP://NORDICLIFESCIENCE.ORG/AUTHOR/ANNELI/](http://nordiclifescience.org/author/anneli/)) - AUGUST 25, 2017

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Cancer Moonshot was one of the main issues at this year's Swedish-American Life Science Summit and the possibilities of immunotherapy alongside with more collaborations and sharing of data were highlighted as key factors to continue the fight against cancer.

The annual event was according to tradition filled with seminars, discussions and networking. One of this year's main themes was Joseph Biden's Cancer Moonshot, and there to represent the initiative was Mr. Gregory Simon, Executive Director of The Biden Cancer Initiative. Collaborations have been crucial to the Cancer Moonshot project's success, said Simon. Collaborations various agencies, academia and companies that have resulted in new ideas and projects that, as Gregory Simon put it, probably never would have come up. The lack of shared data and information between these institutions has been a crucial matter, Simon argued.

“Despite the millions of scientists, tools, treatments and strategies we have developed over the years, there is still one critical thing that hasn’t changed. We still share data in the same way as we did in the 1950s. Vital information is to a great extent shared in person and there is a culture of holding back data.”

Without transparency and immediate sharing of knowledge and data, we cannot win the fight against cancer, Simon stated.

“We need to change our culture on sharing data and people’s minds about what is possible. That can’t change unless people like you, leaders, believe we can do it and act on those beliefs.”

Future possibilities

Dr. Carl Borrebaeck, Professor and Director at CREATE Health Cancer Center, gave in insight into what’s on in cancer research. The good news, as Borrebaeck put it, is what the past decades of work has resulted in. Namely, vastly improved knowledge about not only cancer types but more specific details on various tumors. The extended knowledge and improved tools has increased the number of survivors among cancer patients from 3 million in the early 1970s to the current 15 million. Nevertheless, cancer keeps claiming more lives. By 2013 cancer has overtaken cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death in 23 US states, noted Borrebaeck.

When it comes to the development of treatment methods, he emphasized the paradigm shift immunotherapy has meant in cancer treatment. Precision diagnostics will be another vital tool, as “early diagnosis and detection could save millions of lives”. Digital oncology, where patients can be more involved, also presents itself as a way towards increased survival rates.

Panel discussion pinpointed main tasks

The presentations were round off by a panel discussion on the breakthrough challenges for cancer moonshot. The panel consisted of Dr. Bahija Jallal, Head of MedImmune and Executive Vice President at AstraZeneca, Mr. Gregory Simon, Dr. Jonas Bergh, Professor in Oncology and Director of the Strategic Research Program in Cancer, KI and Dr. Rex Yung, Lung Cancer Specialist at the Great Baltimore Medical Center. Expectations on the continuous work on cancer, treatment possibilities and preventative measures were some of the topics brought up by moderator Dr. Eugen Steiner, HealthCap.

The progress that has been made thus far in cancer research needs to be acknowledged, said Dr. Bahija Jallal, pointing to the development within targeted therapy and immunotherapy.

“The advancement that has been done in immunotherapy I never thought it would have happened in my lifetime. We really need to recognize the paradigm shift of cancer treatments and what immunotherapy has done when it comes to for example melanoma patients. Nevertheless, we cannot be satisfied yet. The marathon to tackle cancer is just getting started.”

Dr. Jallal also highlighted the need for more longitudinal studies to find out more about cancer triggers and early detection to make a difference for patients. Dr. Rex Yung emphasized the importance of engaging patients, families and health care communities to a larger extent. In order to do so, there needs to be an improvement when it comes to reaching out with information.

“Access to both care and knowledge must be made in an accessible and readable way for people. Data sharing in this new digital era will be crucial to continue the fight against cancer.”

Yung pointed out some important factors; knowledge among medical caregivers, patients and family, a better fluency in communication, consumer understanding and satisfaction and last but not least the dimension of time for primary care practitioners, enabling them to have enough time to explain the situation to a full extent to patients.

Read our profile interview with Bahija Jallal here!



Embracing diversity – for the sake of true innovation

Bahija Jallal's curiosity and passion for science have been strong driving forces throughout her entire career, as has her belief in the need for diversity to truly bring forth innovation. A view that is also deeply incorporated in her job as Head of MedImmune. Founded in 1988, the MedImmune built its reputation on Synagis, used ...
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