

iSTAR Newsletter, July 2026

1. 43rd Blankenese Conference 2026
2. Welcome to iSTAR
3. Congratulations – interim evaluation
4. iSTAR Retreat 2026
5. EMPOWER-ACS meeting
6. Call for applications
7. Significant publications by iSTARs

1. 43rd Blankenese Conference 2026

A particular highlight in May was the co-organisation of the Blankenese Conference 2026 “Tissue-immune interactions in inflammatory diseases”, which brought together internationally leading experts in translational immunology, infection biology, and inflammation research. The conference provided unique opportunities for direct interactions between iSTAR fellows and internationally recognized scientific leaders, strengthening mentoring relationships, recruitment efforts, and international collaborations.

Impressions from the 43rd Blankenese Conference (please follow the link: [Conference 2026 | Blankenese Conferences](#))



JUNG Lecturers Jens Brüning (left) and Hans Clevers together with Blanche Schwappach-Pignataro, Dean of the Medical Faculty of the University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) and Member of the Board of Trustees of the JUNG Foundation for Science & Research.

The Conference Chair person Eckart D. Gundelfinger (from left) with the members of the Organizing Committee Lidia Bosurgi, Samuel Huber and Manuel Friese (far right) and Scientific Coordinators Sonja Hiekmann and Anne Willing (middle).



2. Welcome to iSTAR

As part of the iSTAR Retreat 2026, Prof. S. Huber and Prof. M. M. Addo handed the iSTAR certificates over to the new iSTAR candidates.



Dr. Sebastian Sewerin was recruited from the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard (Cambridge, USA). As the first iSTAR of the sustained program, he has been working since May 2026 in the III. Department of Medicine on the project “Identifying therapeutic strategies from etiology-independent mechanisms of nephrotic syndrome”.

Dr. Jenny Krause from the Center for Immunology at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis (USA) has been recruited to the UKE. She is the last candidate of the BMFTR-funded iSTAR program. Since beginning of this month she is working in the I. Department of Medicine on the project “CD8 T Cell-mediated “Bystander” Inflammation in Chronically Progressive Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis”. Currently, a PhD position is being advertised in her group (see chapter 6).



Also **Dr. Joseph Tintelnot** (senior physician and medical specialist in Internal Medicine and Hematology/Oncology at the II. Department of Medicine) received his iSTAR certificate. He joined the iSTAR program in November 2025 as an associated member. His research focuses on tumor immunology and immunotherapy.

A warm welcome to iSTAR!

3. Congratulations on passing your interim evaluation!

Five iSTAR candidates have been in the iSTAR program for approximately three years and were evaluated as part of the CS Retreat 2026. All five iSTARs passed the evaluation successfully, and we look forward to a continued good and successful collaboration.

Congratulations to **Dr. Julia Pagel**, **PD Dr. Sina Rosenkranz**, **Dr. Johannes Hartl**, **Dr. Fabian Braun** and **PD Dr. Malte Mohme!**

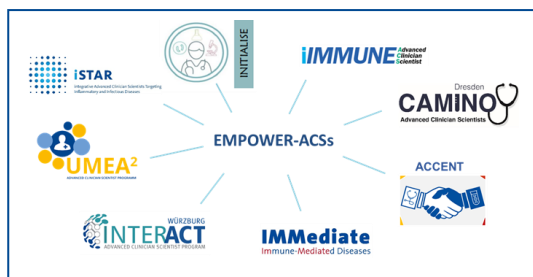
4. iSTAR Retreat 2026



We are pleased to share a group picture from the CS Retreat 2026, which brought together our community for an inspiring and engaging meeting. The retreat was organized by iDfellows, iSTAR, and iPRIME-CS.

Thank you to everyone who joined and contributed with their energy and active participation. The discussions throughout the retreat were particularly valuable and provided great motivation for the continued collaboration within our network.

5. EMPOWER-ACS meeting



The next EMPOWER-ACS meeting will take place on **April 15th and 16th, 2027**, in Hamburg at the UKE. We are very pleased that iSTAR has been selected to organize the meeting next year, and we look forward to an inspiring event.

6. Call for applications, Jenny Krause

In Jenny Krause's group, a call for applications is available in association with CRC 1700. Applications must be submitted by **July 27, 2026**. Please scan the QR code for further information.



7. Significant publications by iSTARs

Please find press releases related to an iSTAR publication by **Christian Schmidt-Lauber** on the following link:

[Parodontitis: Kann sie auf frühe Nierenschäden hinweisen? | Leben & Wissen | BILD.de](#)

[Bleeding gums and kidney disease? Study uncovers a surprising link | EurekAlert!](#)

Sina Rosenkranz:

Rosenkranz SC[†], da Rocha JF[#], Moreira L[#], Schlachter P[#], Bier J[#], Healy K, Silva DN, Iqbal MA, Gharagozloo M, Xiong Y, Murphy MA, Lichtenfeld HC, Raich L, Schweizer M, Ertas A, Woo MS, Vieira V, Honeycutt SE, White JP, Wyant GA, Frieze MA, Calabresi PA, Sîrbulescu RF, Wrann CD. The exercise hormone irisin has neuroprotective effects in a mouse model of multiple sclerosis. **Nat Metab**. 2026 May;8(5):1051-1066. doi: 10.1038/s42255-026-01527-7. Epub 2026 May 21. PMID: 42168599; PMCID: PMC13218937. . † Jointly supervised / senior co-author contribution

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