

Nearly two years ago representatives from science and industry united to the **Arbeitsgemeinschaft Biomaterialien NRW e.V.** under the auspices of the NRW Ministry for School, Science and Research (MSWF) to further intensify the fruitful cooperation, which had already existed for more than a decade, and to further strengthen the innovative forces in NRW in that field. There is no doubt about the importance of state-of-the-art, future-oriented medicine both for the supply of the population and for the development of the medicotechnical industry. The NRW MSWF greets and supports the initiative.

Due to the broad application of biomaterials as a medical product, as active and passive implants and as instruments or agents for avoidance of undesired indirect reactions of the body, the members of the **AG Biomaterialien NRW e.V.** come from all fields of medical science, natural science and science of engineering as well as from the processing industry and service enterprises. Together they work on new solutions, e.g. for catheters, blood filters, wound coverings, sensors or implants, e.g. cardiac valves, hip joint and knee joint prostheses, conar and peripheral stents and neural prosthetic systems. Apart from these examples various aspects of modern local therapies ("Local Drug Delivery") are discussed by an expert committee, which also proposes projects.

Science and industry work intensively on the development of artificial organs, implantable sensor systems and more accurate, more precise dosage systems, by means of which new, hopeful patient therapy courses can be followed. For this purpose biomaterials with permanent blood and tissue tolerance are needed. The high research level at the NRW universities as well as a modern industry and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in and around North Rhine-Westphalia offer the best conditions for taking a leading position internationally.

Material science, medicotechnical industry and clinical research come closer together with **AG Biomaterialien NRW e.V.** in NRW. Thanks to intensive cooperation between science and medicotechnical firms innovative, trend-setting and competitive medical products are to become ready for the market faster than earlier to take share in the worldwide annual growth of 10 - 12 % and to contribute much to the development of state-of-the-art and well-tolerated medicine. The NRW location is strengthened in that way and becomes attractive for the set-up of companies, investments and settlement of firms producing related technologies.

The non-profit association **AG Biomaterialien NRW e.V.** not only promotes intensive cooperation by way of public relations, specialist conferences, workshops and training courses, but also science and medical technology in NRW. The expert committees of the association are to take up questions from daily practice and to propose, attend and execute corresponding projects, expert opinions etc. in the field of basic and applied research as well as for the development of medical products.

Economic promotion programmes are to be used more than earlier for research close to application together with enterprises. Moreover, university spin-offs are to be supported. Here small and medium-sized enterprises and their increased cooperation with the leading research are prioritized. The basis has been created with the support of the Land government; all interested parties from research, industry, politics and associations are called upon to use the chance.

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Alfons Fischer

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