

**Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, at the
10th anniversary celebration for the University of Iceland Biomedical
Centre. Held in Veröld on Friday 22 April 2022, 2 pm**

Dear guests. Congratulations to the University of Iceland Biomedical Centre on its 10th anniversary, which we are gathered to celebrate today. The Biomedical Centre is something the University of Iceland can be immensely proud of!

Although we are celebrating its 10th anniversary, the BMC was first conceived around 15 years ago as an informal interdisciplinary researcher network. It was then formally established in 2011 as a collaboration between research teams in biomedical molecular life sciences. The primary goal of the Centre is to strengthen life science research through joint development and management of core units and efficient sharing of equipment and other infrastructures. The life sciences have been advancing very rapidly over the last few years and decades. In order to remain an active and internationally competitive participant in these developments, the BMC endeavours to ensure that all research teams are able to access the latest technology and methods.

Around 60 teams work under the umbrella of the BMC, conducting research in a wide range of subjects, including gene therapy, physiology, pharmacy, molecular cancer biology, stem cell function and specialisation, regulation of gene expression, neurobiology, and developmental biology.

Research at the BMC is cross-disciplinary, based on international and domestic collaboration, which runs across many institutions. Within the University of Iceland, research teams at the Centre are made up of scientists and students from the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Iceland's School of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences and the Faculty of Physical Sciences at the University's School of Engineering and Natural Sciences. The Centre also has connections with teams from other domestic institutions, such as Landspítali University Hospital, the Institute for Experimental Pathology at Keldur, Reykjavík University, the University of Akureyri, the Agricultural University of Iceland, and the Icelandic Cancer Society.

Cultivating a network between such a wide range of different parties has enabled the BMC to develop core operations around different methods and expensive research equipment that individual teams could not afford to purchase or run by themselves. This teamwork strengthens life sciences in Iceland in the international context. We at the University of Iceland can build on this here, since there are numerous opportunities for further collaboration within the University, opportunities to develop shared infrastructures and joint services for researchers. This would benefit research and ensure optimal use of both funding and the wealth of knowledge and experience among University personnel.

Dear guests. Basic research is the foundation and prerequisite for applied research and innovation. All the most significant advances over the last decades and centuries have in fact had their origins in basic research. The success of the University of Iceland Biomedical Centre is proof of what can be achieved when a large group of researchers and students from different disciplines works towards a common goal. The Centre's success also highlights how incredibly important it is for Iceland to meaningfully support the higher education sector as a wellspring of innovation. This is the way to secure Iceland's future as a globally competitive nation.

The University of Iceland Biomedical Centre unites a large number of outstanding scientists, as well as a strong community of PhD students in its graduate program. Research at the BMC has unquestionably played an important part in establishing the University of Iceland as a leading international research university. Furthermore, staff members at the Biomedical Centre are not just researchers; they are also involved in teaching undergraduate and graduate students at the UI School of Health Sciences and the UI School of Engineering and Natural Sciences. The Centre is a particular draw for international students considering doctoral studies at the University. No fewer than 70 PhD students have completed theses supervised by scientists at the Biomedical Centre. This is a measure of great success.

In conclusion, I want to stress that The University of Iceland Biomedical Centre is a leading example of a successful interdisciplinary network at the University of Iceland and the BMC has had a hugely positive impact on research at the University. We are greatly impressed by the activities of the BMC including the strong graduate program. On the basis of all of this, the BMC was rightfully recognised in 2019 as the University of Iceland's first recipient of the award for initiative and leadership.

I congratulate the University of Iceland Biomedical Centre on its 10th anniversary and wish them continued success in the future.

Thank you.