

La Cantera: “A Star Is Born” in Hematology

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During the last couple of years, the European Hematology Association (EHA) has promoted a number of educational workshop formats for young clinical (Clinical Research Training in Hematology) and basic research colleagues (Translational Research Training in Hematology). Recently, EHA has also adopted “La Cantera,” founded in 2012 by Massimo Federico, which takes inspiration from the famous Cantera training camp of the Barcelona Football Club, created for young players with the aim to become champions.^{1,2}

The format of La Cantera mimics that organization, focusing on an intensive interactive format for 4 days with a team of 16–20 young hematologists, the “players” (Figure 1). Each tutorial is headed by an international expert on malignant lymphoma, who acts as the “coach.” The limited number of participants and the selection of a single coach allow to create a unique, very intensive, and informal atmosphere. Indeed, the strength of this course is that it is not set up as a series of frontal lessons, but as a continuous exchange of ideas and visions. This special format optimally supports the young participants to return to their institution with new inspirations for scientific projects, collaborations, and networking.

Especially, the last day of La Cantera is completely devoted to the players: they establish small working groups with the aim of drafting a scientific project based on what they learnt during the course. Finally, each proposal is presented to the general audience, and the scientific committee, including the coach, La Cantera President, and the EHA Lymphoma Group board members evaluate the proposals and award those of highest scientific value and clinical relevance in terms of innovation, unmet needs, and feasibility.

Recently, we carried out an analysis on the scientific outcome of these young hematologists who have participated in La Cantera; the results were presented at a meeting held at the EHA 2022 Congress in Vienna, with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of this course in supporting “rising stars” in hematology. For this evaluation, 2 parameters were taken into consideration: the numbers of articles authored or coauthored by the players at least 1 year after participating in La Cantera, and the associated impact of the journals (for simplicity, we have used here the impact factor of the journals, but we realize that other metrics are valuable as well, such as the number of citations).

Since its foundation in 2012, 9 editions of La Cantera have been held, as listed in Table 1. Considering the 8 editions from 2012 to 2019, a total of 117 young hematologists “played” at La Cantera, with an average of 15 participants (range 12–24) per year. Overall, 1614 articles fulfilling the selection criteria were retrieved in Pubmed, published in good quality peer-reviewed journals. In more detail, 86% of players published at least 1 article and 45% published 10 or more articles. Based on the average number of annual publications post Cantera, 13% of all players published an average of 5 or more articles per year.

In addition, starting from the 2018 edition and motivated by the spirit of Cantera, the players initiated various scientific projects. The first project “Towards personalized medicine for refractory/relapsed follicular lymphoma patients: the Cantera/Lupiae registry” has already become a reality and is actively recruiting patients in several European countries. Others are following! Similarly, in 2019, the winner was the Dante study “Dynamic Assessment of circulating tumor DNA in T-cell Lymphoma: a multicenter observational study.”

This brief overview of the scientific activities of our “players” illustrates that Cantera has been successfully fostering “rising stars” from all over Europe to initiate own scientific projects, establish international peer networks, and probably most importantly, become even more enthusiastic about the vibrant field of hematology. Thus, we are very much looking forward to the 2023 edition of La Cantera!

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Figure 1. La Cantera 2022 coaches and players.

Table 1

Editions of La Cantera From 2012 to 2022

Year	Coach	Topic
2012	Volker Diehl	Hodgkin lymphoma
2013	Bruce Cheson	Definition of new strategies for evaluating the efficacy of novel therapeutic approaches including the definition of response criteria
2014	Richard Fisher	Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma
2015	R. Gascoyne and K. Savage	Malignant lymphomas: from bench to bedside
2016	Andrew Zelenetz	Indolent B-cell lymphoma
2017	S. Rosen and J. Chan	T-cell lymphomas
2018	Stephen Ansell	How is immunotherapy changing the outlook for patients with lymphoma?
2019	Anas Younes	Precision medicine in lymphoma
2022	M. Dreyling and W. Klapper	WHO classification of lymphoid malignancies: what is new and impact on clinical management?

The 2020 and 2021 editions had to be canceled due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. SARS-CoV-2 = severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

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