**PRESSE RELEASE**

**KL receives accreditation for PhD programme "Mental Health and Neuroscience"**

***Krems, 21.2.2024 - Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences in Krems (KL Krems) has successfully received accreditation for its first PhD programme "Mental Health and Neuroscience". On 16 February 2024, the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (AQ Austria) legally approved KL Krems' application to establish the doctoral programme. The University of Health in Lower Austria has thus set another key milestone in its academic study architecture.***

The PhD programme „Mental Health and Neuroscience: Disease Mechanisms – Diagnostics and Therapy – Clinical Neuroscience“at KL Krems is a quality-assured doctoral programme with an interdisciplinary focus in the field of mental health, basic neurobiological research and clinical and applied neuroscience: It enables PhD students to develop and conduct experimental and empirical research projects in these highly relevant bridging disciplines in health science. The aim is to enable future scientists to take a coherent view of the different subject areas and at the same time carry out specialized research work.

*„After an intensive phase of preparation and several months of assessment by AQ Austria, we are very pleased that the unique interdisciplinary orientation of our doctoral programme has been positively assessed,"* emphasizes Prof. Dr. Rudolf Mallinger, Rector of KL Krems. *„This underlines once again that we have truly got our finger on the pulse of the times with our focus on interdisciplinarity in our teaching and research programmes. We are thus building a valuable bridge in these highly relevant topics in order to pool expertise and inspire young prospective researchers for this exciting field."*

The bridge discipline "Mental Health and Neuroscience" has been promoted at KL Krems for many years in the form of a core research area. *„With the PhD programme, we are now offering a promising training programme for graduates of medicine, psychology and relevant natural science studies who can obtain their scientific qualification at our university in order to ultimately establish themselves in international scientific society with their research work",* summarizes Prof. Dr. Gerald Obermair, who heads the Division of Physiology at the Department of Pharmacology, Physiology and Microbiology and coordinates the PhD programme. *„With the accreditation, we can actively promote the doctoral programme and expect a great deal of interest in this topic."*

**WHO recommends scientific research into mental health**

Studies show that people with severe depression or schizophrenia have a 40 to 60 times higher risk of dying prematurely. This is partly due to physical health problems that often go untreated, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease or diabetes. At the same time, physical illnesses can also have a lasting effect on the psyche. Research into mental health, i.e. how it affects our thinking, behavior and body, is also expressly recommended in the World Mental Health Report of the World Health Organization (WHO). In future, neuroscience should be more closely involved in questions relating to mental health in order to define and treat disorders of the nervous system.

**Three levels of research work**

Specifically, the researchers at KL Krems are working on this highly topical subject on three levels. They benefit from the close collaboration between the various research working groups. *„Basic neurobiological research is the first area of the research programme,"* explains Gerald Obermair. *„Here we investigate disease mechanisms and physical components, for example in relation to the plasticity of individual nerve cells and the brain.“* Neurological and degenerative diseases can lead to disorders of this plasticity, the reasons for which are multifactorial. In the case of autism or schizophrenia, for example, it is important to investigate the cellular causes that may underlie these developmental disorders." In addition, methods are being developed to enable the early detection of degenerative eye diseases and neuronal circulatory disorders using retinal diagnostics. This also includes the further development of state-of-the-art statistical methods.

The second level, which is being implemented in close cooperation with the university hospitals in Tulln and St. Pölten, deals with the diagnosis and treatment of mental health. Gerald Obermair: *„This is about psychological components, i.e. which methods we can use and develop to investigate how mental health disorders develop and how the often very complex treatment strategies can be successfully implemented."* Other important questions include how to deal with artificial intelligence and big data in the future. *„In clinical psychiatry in particular, these are complex diagnostic criteria that could enable us to identify and treat causes.“*

Clinical and applied neurosciences form the third research focus, which is also being developed together with the clinics' experts. *„Here we are looking at the development and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, clinical neurooncology and neuroimmunology. And we are investigating questions such as how food allergies can affect mental health or what consequences a stroke can have on the psyche",* summarizes the physiologist.

More about the Principal Investigators of the PhD-Programme „Mental Health and Neuroscience“ read more <https://www.kl.ac.at/en/news/kl-receives-accreditation-phd-programme-mental-health-and-neuroscience>

**Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences (as of 2024)**

At Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences in Krems (KL Krems), the comprehensive approach to health and disease is a fundamental objective for research and teaching. With its Europe-wide recognized bachelor-master system, KL Krems is a flexible educational institution that is tailored to the needs of students, the requirements of the labor market as well as the scientific challenges. Currently KL Krems hosts more than 800 students in the fields of medicine and psychology. The three university hospitals in Krems, St. Poelten and Tulln as well as ion beam therapy and research centre MedAustron in Wiener Neustadt ensure clinical teaching and research at the highest quality level. In research, KL Krems focuses on interdisciplinary fields with high relevance to health policy - including medical technology, molecular oncology, mental health and neuroscience, as well as water quality and related health aspects. KL Krems was founded in 2013 and accredited by the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (AQ Austria). [www.kl.ac.at/en](http://www.kl.ac.at/en)

**Press enquiries:**

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