

# INTERNATIONAL CAR-T SYMPOSIUM

Current state and clinical applications of CAR-T technology in the Baltic-Nordic region

Tartu University Hospital, A. Linkberg auditorium

January 21st 2026, 10:00-16:30

## PROGRAM

09:30–10:00 Registration & Coffee

### Session I — Current State and Clinical Applications of CAR-T Technology in the Baltic-Nordic Region

10:00–10:15 Opening Remarks



#### 10:15–11:00 Keynote Lecture Prof. David N. Wald, MD, PhD

(Kure Cells, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, USA)  
"Advances in CAR-T therapy"

11:00–11:15 Questions & Discussion

#### 11:15–11:45 Erja Kerkelä, PhD

(Associate Professor, Development Manager, Finnish Red Cross Blood Service, Advanced Cell Therapy Centre, Finland)  
"Preclinical development of FiCAR-T cell therapy at the Finnish Red Cross Blood Service"

#### 11:45–12:15 Prof. Laimonas Griskevicius, MD, PhD

(Head of the Hematology, Oncology and Transfusion Medicine Center, Vilnius University Hospital Santaros Klinikos, Vilnius, Lithuania)  
"Current state of CAR-T in Lithuania and Future Directions"

#### 12:15–12:30 Ain Kaare, MD

(Head of hematology and oncology clinic, Tartu University Hospital, Estonia)  
"Current state of CAR-T in Estonia"

12:30–13:00 Panel Discussion

13:00–13:45 Lunch

### Session II — Emerging Opportunities, Research Directions, and Novel Concepts in Cellular Therapies for Solid Tumors

#### 13:45–14:30 Keynote Lecture Prof. Kazuki N. Sugahara, MD, PhD

(Columbia University Irving Medical Center/  
New York-Presbyterian Hospital, USA)  
"Tumor-penetrating CAR-T cells"



14:30–14:45 Questions & Discussion

#### 14:45–15:15 Tanel Mahlaköiv, PhD

(Director of Translational Research at Icosagen Cell Factory, Estonia)  
"Building Better Binders: How Icosagen's Antibody Pipeline Powers Next-Gen CAR-T Therapies for Solid Tumors"

#### 15:15–15:45 Prof. Tambet Teesalu, PhD

(Head of the Laboratory of Precision and Nanomedicine, University of Tartu, Estonia;  
Distinguished Visiting Professor, Materials Research Laboratory, University of California Santa Barbara, USA)

"In vivo peptide phage display: mapping tissue and disease specific molecular landscapes for targeted therapies"

15:45–16:15 Panel Discussion

16:15–16:30 Closing remarks

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## Annotation:

The CAR-T Symposium, held in Tartu on January 21st 2026, brings together leading clinicians, researchers, and translational experts to discuss the current state and emerging clinical applications of CAR-T cell therapy in the Baltic-Nordic region. Estonia is in the developmental phase of implementing CAR-T treatment, with preparations underway to establish clinical capability at Tartu University Hospital and the North Estonian Medical Centre in the coming year.

**The first session of the symposium** will feature contributions from regional and international centers with established CAR-T programs. The keynote lecture will be delivered by Prof. David N. Wald, MD, PhD (Kure Cells biotech company, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, USA). He will introduce a breakthrough technology related to a 2-day CD19 CAR-T program and broader advances in CAR-T therapy, including very interesting preliminary clinical data. Representatives from Helsinki, Erja Kerkelä, PhD (Associate Professor, Development Manager, Finnish Red Cross Blood Service, Advanced Cell Therapy Centre, Finland) will present recent developments in Finland. Our guests from Lithuania, Prof. Laimonas Griskevicius, MD, PhD (Head of the Hematology, Oncology and Transfusion Medicine Center, Vilnius University Hospital Santaros Klinikos, Vilnius, Lithuania) will speak about the current state of CAR-T in Lithuania and about future prospects. First session will end with the presentation from Estonia-Ain Kaare, (Head of hematology and oncology clinic from Tartu University Hospital, Estonia) will talk about the current state of CAR-T in Estonia.

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**The second session** will focus on advances in CAR-T therapies for solid tumors.

Prof. Kazuki N. Sugahara, MD, PhD (Columbia University Irving Medical Center/ New York-Presbyterian Hospital, USA) will present recent progress in iRGD-mediated enhancement of CAR-T cell penetration into solid tumors. Additional talks by Tanel Mahlaköiv, PhD (Director of Translational Research at Icosagen Cell Factory, Estonia) and Prof. Tambet Teesalu, PhD (Head of the Laboratory of Precision and Nanomedicine, University of Tartu; Distinguished Visiting Professor, Materials Research Laboratory, University of California Santa Barbara) will highlight translational research directions, including antibody engineering and precision delivery technologies.

Estonia has recently advanced its GMP and clinical infrastructure for CAR-T manufacturing, while parallel research efforts are developing gene-editing approaches for in vivo and ex vivo T-cell engineering, as well as novel binders targeting solid tumors. The symposium aims to foster scientific exchange, strengthen collaboration across university hospitals, and support the coordinated development of next-generation cellular therapies in the region.

## Registration and event details:

21th of January, 2026

From 10:00 to 16:30

Tartu University Hospital, A. Linkberg auditorium (Puusepa 8, D-wing, 2nd floor)

Registration for Tartu University Hospital employees

Registration for guests outside Tartu University Hospital