Cardiovascular diseases cause nearly one-third of all deaths in the world - hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths each year in the U.S. alone. To help address this global public health crisis, Liryc - the Heart Rhythm Disease Institute in Bordeaux, France launched a major fundraising campaign in 2020. Named ‘Light Up Your Heart’, the campaign aims to raise at least 10 million euros in five years to support scientific and technological progress that will contribute to new treatment and prevention approaches.
PIONEERING MEDICAL INNOVATION

The Liryc Institute was officially established in 2012 as part of France’s national investment plan to support scientific innovation and excellence, along with six other university hospital institutes. In close coordination with the CHU of Bordeaux, Hospital Haut-Leveque, based in Pessac, a suburb of Bordeaux in the southwest of France, Liryc brings together an exceptional clinical and research team of over 160 experts in the field of heart rhythm disorders, representing at least two dozen nationalities. “We are working together in a fully coordinated way, to transform the way we treat patients with heart rhythm disorders,” says Professor Hiroshi Ashikaga, a Hawaii-based cardiologist.

Many of the doctors and researchers at the Institute have spent decades studying heart rhythm disorders, most notably its Founder, Dr. Michel Haïssaguerre, an award-winning French cardiologist and electrophysiologist. Since then, the efforts of Liryc’s teams have resulted in significant scientific breakthroughs toward the cure and prevention of the two main types of arrhythmias: atrial and ventricular fibrillation—the former being most common and a major risk factor for strokes, heart failure and dementia, while the latter is synonymous with sudden death.

“I WAS IMMEDIATELY IMPRESSED BY LIRYC’S COMMITMENT TO COMBINE CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH WITH CLINICAL WORK. I FELT THAT THEIR EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING IMAGING AND ABLATION TECHNIQUES WOULD INCREASE MY CHANCES OF RECOVERY.”

MARK BAILEY

The Institute’s fundraising officer, Marie Kammah, describes the creation of Liryc as a turning point: “The collaboration with industrial partners amplified the scientific endeavors, expanding the scope of research efforts and resulting in pioneering innovations.” Some of these recent achievements include the development of cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT), which treats heart failure with a procedure that involves a special...
type of pacemaker; the identification of the sources of atrial fibrillation, the most common arrhythmia, leading to the creation of a procedure that benefits over 75,000 patients in the United States alone; and many more innovative, life-saving interventions, such as advances in prevention of sudden death caused by ventricular fibrillation.

LIGHT UP YOUR HEART
Funds raised through the ‘Light Up Your Heart’ campaign support the Liryc Institute’s main areas of focus: research and care, education and training, and technological innovation. One of the top priorities is to accelerate research for new treatments and improve care for the increasing number of older patients suffering from atrial fibrillation.

In the field of technological innovation, Liryc focuses on developing non-invasive and personalized therapies through its cardiac imaging platform. This requires cutting-edge equipment such as the recently acquired photon-counting computed tomography scanner, a revolutionary instrument that makes it possible to visualize cardiac structure abnormalities at the origin of sudden cardiac death.

“LIRYC’S COMMITMENT TO UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES OF HEART RHYTHM DISORDERS, OUR INNOVATIVE TREATMENT APPROACHES AND ONGOING PURSUIT OF ADVANCED SOLUTIONS, ALL SHOWCASE THE INSTITUTE’S SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON THE MEDICAL FIELD AND STRONG WILL TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE.”

– MARIE KAMMAH

Funding for education and training allows Liryc to disseminate knowledge and innovations developed by the Institute’s international teams, in order to optimize patient care in the greatest number of care centers around the world. Through initiatives such as the Open Rhythmology Academy, Liryc strives to become a global leader in the fields of cardiac electrophysiology, engineering applied to cardiology, and cardiac imaging. A total of 505 health professionals and students participated in this comprehensive training program last year.

Beyond the specific projects mentioned, Liryc is also actively engaged in various innovative research endeavors related to cardiovascular health. “These include studies on personalized therapies, new treatment approaches, and the development of cutting-edge medical technologies,” says Kammah. The Institute’s collaborative and interdisciplinary approach fosters an environment conducive to groundbreaking discoveries.
The Liryc Institute began partnering with Myriad USA in 2019 with the explicit goal of accessing a wider pool of potential donors and securing additional funding to further its operations, research, and initiatives, explains Kammah. To date, approximately one-quarter of donations for the ‘Light Up Your Heart’ campaign have come from the United States. “We are very lucky to be able to count on the generosity and engagement of several U.S. donors. They are very passionate about our cause, and they can support our efforts through our Friends of the Liryc Institute hosted at Myriad USA,” says Kammah.

Those passionate donors include Mark Bailey, a patient who suffered heart arrhythmias for over two decades before his doctor in San Francisco recommended Liryc for treatment. “I was immediately impressed by Liryc’s commitment to combine cutting-edge research with clinical work,” says Bailey. “I felt that their experience and leadership in developing imaging and ablation techniques would increase my chances of recovery.”

Active support from donors like Mark and his wife Laura—who have hosted fundraisers for the Liryc Institute through virtual gatherings and events in Boston and California—is key to the success of the ‘Light Up Your Heart’ campaign, as it enters its final year in 2024.

The funds raised will invariably support a strategic plan that includes major projects at the Liryc Institute moving forward. These include the research programs for preventing sudden death and treating atrial fibrillation, particularly in women, who tend to have more severe symptoms and experience greater impairment in their quality of life, the creation of a cardiac bioengineering platform, the advancement of the imagery platform using the recently-acquired latest-generation scanner, the launch of a patient education program, and the development of a graduate school for cardiac electrophysiology. “Together, we are offering a healthy future for people suffering from heart rhythm diseases,” says Dr. Mélèze Hocini, Deputy Director of the Liryc Institute and Campaign Director for ‘Light Up Your Heart’.

https://www.ihu-liryc.fr/en/
https://www.every.org/liryc-heart-rhythm-disease-institute

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