

Press release

Geneva, 4 October 2021

New Appointment

PROFESSOR LAURENT KAISER TAKES THE HELM OF THE HUG DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

On 1st October 2021, Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) appointed Prof. Laurent Kaiser as Chairman of the Department of Medicine. He was previously Head of the Division of Infectious Diseases, Director of the Virology Laboratory and Director of the Center for Emerging Viral Diseases at the HUG, a WHO national reference center for Switzerland, and Full Professor of Medicine at the University of Geneva's Faculty of Medicine.

Laurent Kaiser graduated from the University of Geneva in 1987 and is a certified specialist in infectious diseases, internal medicine and clinical microbiology.

He experienced the frontline of the AIDS epidemic and the advent of triple therapies, and spent a post-doctoral period specialising in clinical virology at the University of Virginia in the US. Back in Geneva, he became a consultant in infectious diseases, then in 2006 was appointed head of the Virology Laboratory, which quickly became one of the leading laboratories in Switzerland, astutely integrating all the expertise useful for a university hospital. Laurent Kaiser's research focused in particular on respiratory viruses such as rhinoviruses, coronavirus and influenza, well before the advent of the 2009 H1N1 and COVID-19 pandemics.

In October 2013, he took the helm of the Infectious Diseases Division and directed clinical and academic activities in the fields of infectious diseases and microbiology. Under his supervision, the division developed extensive expertise, as well as pushing for continuity in the broad and varied fields of infectious diseases and developing specialized units covering both HIV and infections linked to immunosuppressants.

The Virology Laboratory and Center for Emerging Viral Diseases

Under his leadership, the HUG Virology Laboratory began to diversify, housing the National Reference Center for influenza, then measles, and from 2005 the Diagnostic Laboratory for Emerging Viruses (CRIVE). The aim of the latter is to identify and detect viruses of all levels of concern. It is the only diagnostic laboratory of its kind in Switzerland. More recently, he developed the Center for Emerging Viral Diseases, supported by the Faculty and the HUG.

Prof. Kaiser has also acquired field experience in epidemics such as Ebola. In January 2020, he and his team found themselves front and centre of the COVID-19 pandemic and were responsible for the diagnosis of the first Swiss cases. They have been heavily involved in research on SARS-CoV-2, in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, and have set up various collaborations at the HUG and at national level. The HUG Virology Laboratory has also become a COVID-19 reference center for the WHO. Laurent Kaiser has initiated major seroprevalence studies, the validation of antibody tests, and the characterization of the viral kinetics and clinical characteristics of SARS-CoV-2.

The Department of Medicine

Prof. Laurent Kaiser takes over from Prof. Pierre-Yves Martin, who is retiring from hospital management at the Department of Medicine, which he has headed since 2013. Professor Martin took the reins of the HUG Nephrology Division in 2000, which he developed and transformed into the Nephrology and Hypertension Division in 2018. At his instigation, the Department focused on developing its medical specialties, particularly in the outpatient and interventional fields, to offer patients excellence in medicine and care. Under his leadership, stronger connections between healthcare professions have been forged. Prof. Martin also successfully led the smooth integration of the General Internal Medicine Division into the Department of Medicine.

With nearly 1,500 employees, the HUG Department of Medicine comprises general internal medicine as well as all the specialist fields focused on the different body systems and organs: cardiology, rheumatology, nephrology and hypertension, endocrinology diabetology, nutrition and therapeutic patient education, gastroenterology, pneumology, infectious diseases, general internal medicine, immunology and allergology, angiology and hematology, bone diseases, dermatology and venereology.

The Department's mission is to enable patients to quickly benefit from all available advances in each medical specialty. The speed of technological progress and the development of increasingly complex and individualized treatments require multidisciplinary teams. One of the major challenges in the coming years will be to integrate these new, increasingly specialized therapies into the complex challenges of general internal medicine, taking into account the specificities and complexity of each patient.

For more information

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The HUG: Care, Teaching, and leading-edge Research

The Geneva University Hospital (HUG) comprises [eight public hospitals and two clinics](#). Their missions are to provide health care to the community in all medical specialties, to help train physicians and health professionals, and to conduct medical and clinical research. The HUG operate as a national reference centre for [influenza](#), [emerging viral infections](#), [meningococcus](#), and transplant immunology, and are the [national reference laboratory for histocompatibility](#). They are also a WHO Collaborating Centre [in six areas](#), as well as [Centres of Excellence](#) in a number of sectors. The HUG treat 280,000 patients each year, with a capacity of 2,109 hospital beds, and employ 13.557 people.

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