SDIRSACR

Official Journal of the Serbian Association for Cancer Research
Koračak Lj., Nikolić A., Oncol Insights 2026 No. 4

615.27:061.2
615:061(497.11)"2026"
https://doi.org/10.66552/OI202644

Oncology Insights

MEETING REPORT *Open access*

PhotoSCLART workshop: Novel approaches in contemporary anticancer therapy Workshop Highlights

2nd October 2026, Belgrade

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The workshop "Novel Approaches in Contemporary Anticancer Therapy" organized within the framework of the PhotoSCLART project was successfully held on October 2, 2026, at the Palace of Science in Belgrade, Serbia. The PhotoSCLART project, titled "*Development of nature-inspired photoresponsive anticancer agents - sclareol and artemisinin derivatives in cancer multidrug-resistance models: a foundation for the theranostic approach*," is funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. The project focuses on the development of photoresponsive hybrid compounds based on sclareol and artemisinin, with potential applications in cancer diagnostics and therapy, contributing to the advancement of theranostic approaches. The project brings together four partner institutions: University of Belgrade – Faculty of Chemistry (UBFC), as the leading institution, Innovative Centre of the Faculty of Chemistry (ICFC), Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković" – National Institute of Republic of Serbia, University of Belgrade (IBISS), and University of Belgrade – Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy – National Institute of the Republic of Serbia (ICTM).

The workshop was designed around five key themes covering different aspects of contemporary pharmaceutical and medicinal chemistry, from the identification of therapeutic targets and the development and validation of research methods to natural product-inspired drug discovery, innovative synthetic approaches to natural product derivatives and pharmaceuticals, and the subsequent degradation of pharmaceutical compounds in the environment:

- *From Disease to Target*: Identifying Therapeutic Targets
- *From Concept to Evidence*: Method Development and Validation
- *Nature-Inspired Drug Discovery*: Natural Products as a Source of New Drugs
- *Innovative Synthesis*: Developing Efficient Routes to Natural Products and Pharmaceuticals
- *Beyond the Drug*: Understanding Pharmaceutical Degradation in the Environment

The event brought together a large number of researchers at different career stages from a variety of scientific fields, representing 18 institutions, providing an excellent platform for the exchange of knowledge, research experiences, and innovative ideas. The workshop featured five outstanding plenary lectures, seven engaging flash presentations, and ten e-poster presentations, offering participants the opportunity to present their latest research findings and discuss

recent scientific advances, emerging approaches, and challenges across the disciplines represented at the workshop. A total of 70 participants registered for the workshop, reflecting the strong interest in the event and its scientific program. The high attendance, excellent presentations, and lively scientific discussions contributed to the overall success of the event. Importantly, the workshop provided a perfect opportunity to introduce a wider scientific community about ideas, plans and results from the PhotoSCLART project.

The workshop was opened by Dr. Igor Opsenica, Principal Investigator of the PhotoSCLART project, from the UBFC, who provided an overview of the project, highlighting its main objectives, research activities, and key achievements to date. The scientific program began with a plenary lecture by Dr. Milena Čavić from the Institute for Oncology and Radiology of Serbia, titled "*Innovative Approaches for Early Detection and Treatment of Lung Cancer*". Another important aspect of cancer research was addressed by Dr. Danijela Drakulić from the Institute of Molecular Genetics and Genetic Engineering, University of Belgrade, through her lecture titled "*Detection of EGFR gene mutations in tumor tissue and liquid biopsies from patients with lung adenocarcinoma: experience from the Institute of Oncology and Radiology of Serbia*". Broadening the scientific perspective towards natural product research, Dr. Miroslav Novaković from the ICTM, delivered a lecture "*Cytotoxic natural products isolated from the plant and fungal species growing wild in Serbia*". Dr. Jovana Francuz from the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, delivered a lecture entitled "*Whispers of Nature: The Enigmatic Journey of Protulactone A and Aperilactones B & C*". The plenary lecture series concluded with Dr. Bojan Vulović from the UBFC, with a lecture "*Photocatalyst-Free Photochemical Reactions: New Directions in Organic Synthesis*".