



# THE BELGIAN VIRTUAL TUMOURBANK

# The Belgian Virtual Tumourbank (BVT) Catalogue: a tool for translational cancer research

Eva Van der Stock<sup>(1)</sup>, Kim Vande Loock<sup>(1)</sup>, Annelies Debucquoy<sup>(1)</sup>, Katia Emmerechts<sup>(1)</sup>, Liesbet Van Eycken<sup>(1)</sup>, Etienne Marbaix<sup>(2)</sup> on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Belgian Virtual Tumourbank

<sup>1</sup> Belgian Cancer Registry, Koningsstraat 215 bus 7, 1210 Brussels, Belgium

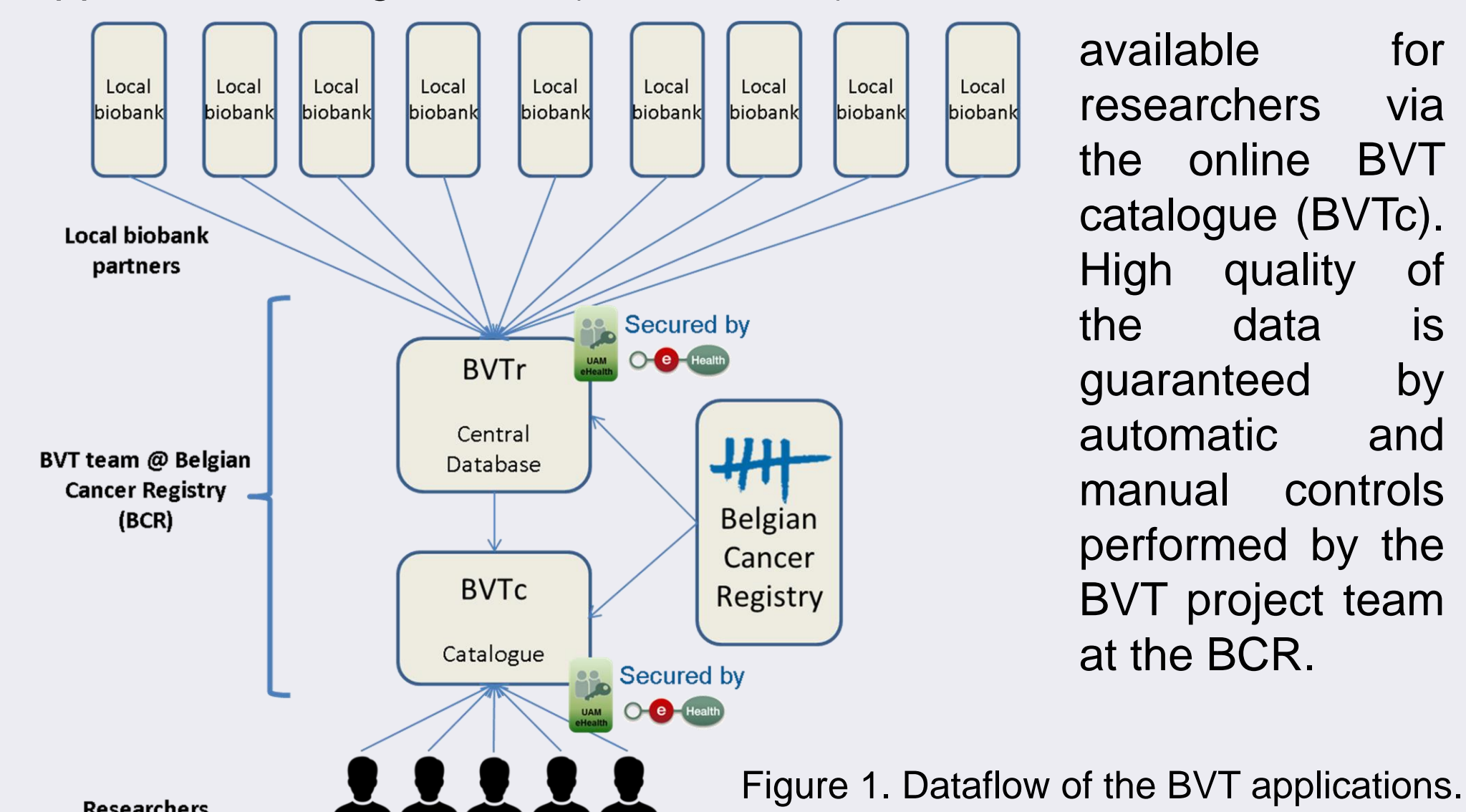
<sup>2</sup> Service d'Anatomie Pathologique, Université Catholique de Louvain, St-Luc University Hospital, 10 Ave Hippocrate, 1200 Brussels, Belgium

## BACKGROUND AND AIM

Biobanks play a critical role in cancer research by providing biological samples of high quality for research. However, the availability of tumour samples in single research institutions is often limited, especially for rare cancers. The Belgian Virtual Tumourbank (BVT)-project was launched in March 2008 by the Belgian Ministry of Public Health (initiative 27 of the Belgian Cancer Plan) to facilitate the search for tumour samples scattered amongst different Belgian institutions with coordination by the Belgian Cancer Registry (BCR).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The BVT network encompasses 11 tumour biobanks from Belgian university hospitals that collect and store residual human tumour samples locally. Data is collected at sample level via a custom-made application for registration (i.e. the BVTr) and a coded version is made



available for researchers via the online BVT catalogue (BVTc). High quality of the data is guaranteed by automatic and manual controls performed by the BVT project team at the BCR.

## RESULTS

The BVT catalogue (BVTc) for tumour sample annotation and traceability is online available since 2012.

It contains medical, technical and patient details, but excludes identifying information to ensure privacy of individuals (check our [website](#) for a list of all variables available in the catalogue).

Currently, more than 111,500 samples, including 86.4% primary tumour samples and 12.1% metastasis samples, are registered and visible for researchers in the BVTc.

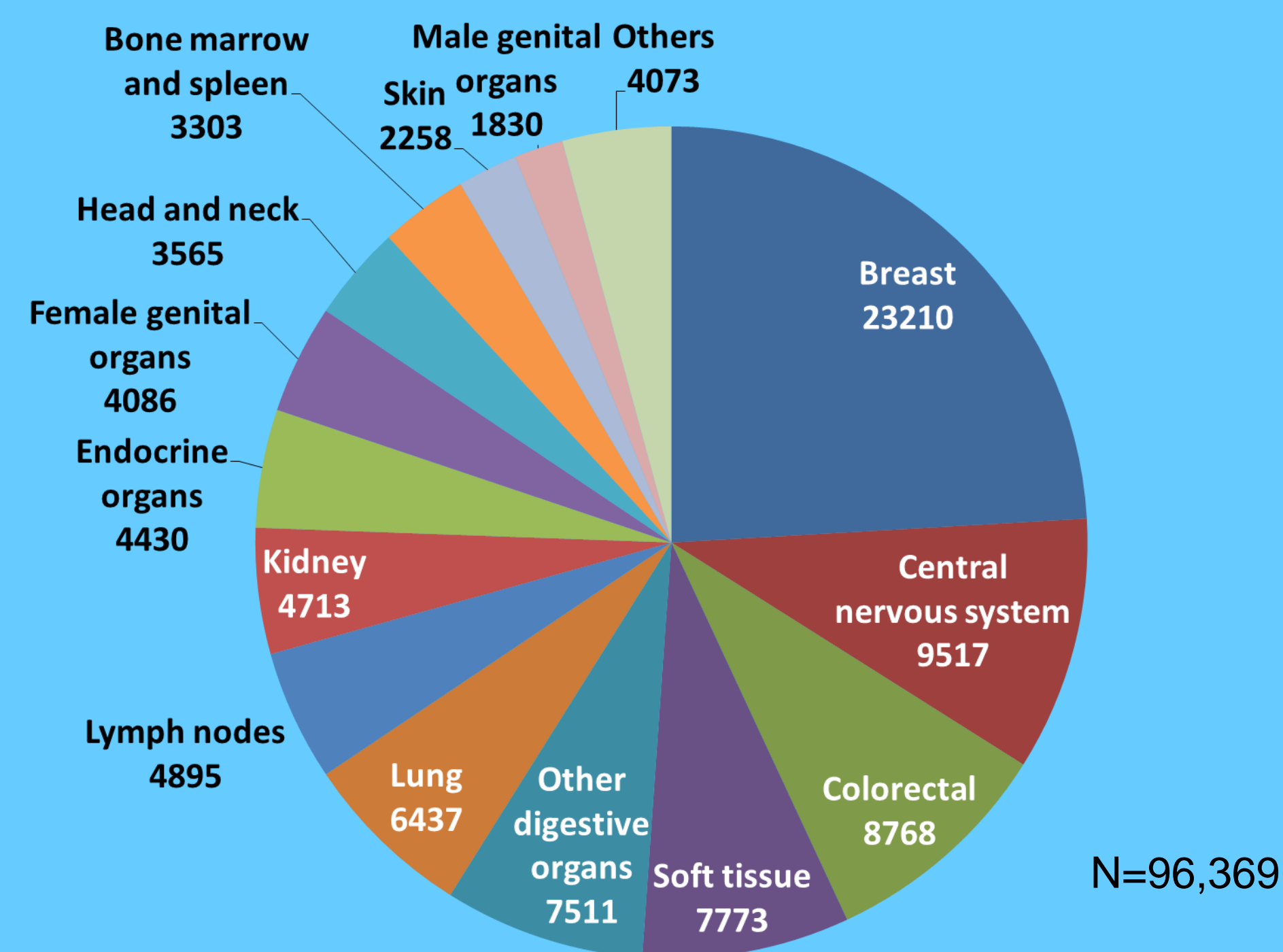


Figure 2. Registrations of primary tumours available in the BVTc according to sample localisation on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### Full access to online BVTc-application:

- **WHO:** Belgian researchers active in the broad field of oncology
- **WHAT:** Full access to the BVTc, to obtain detailed sample level information.
- **HOW:** Go to [www.virtualtumourbank.be](http://www.virtualtumourbank.be) → “Catalogue of biobanked samples” → “Access to the catalogue” → Fill in the catalogue application form → Send (with requested attachments) to [biobank@kankerregister.org](mailto:biobank@kankerregister.org) → After positive evaluation of the request by the BVT Steering Committee, the BVT project team sends the catalogue access agreement → After signing and returning this access agreement, access to the BVTc is provided.

### Quick search for sample availability:

- **WHO:** Any researcher active in the broad field of oncology
- **WHAT:** Easily verify the number of samples of interest registered in the BVTc and the contact info of the local biobanks hosting these samples.
- **HOW:** Go to [www.virtualtumourbank.be](http://www.virtualtumourbank.be) → “Catalogue of biobanked samples” → “Sample availability request form” → Complete the form and click on “send” → The BVT project team will inform you via e-mail about the total number of samples matching your request, including the biobank's contact information.

### Contact us:

[biobank@kankerregister.org](mailto:biobank@kankerregister.org)

+32 (0)2 250 10 10

[www.virtualtumourbank.be](http://www.virtualtumourbank.be)

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