START Expands its Global Early Phase Cancer Site Network into Italy Through Strategic Partnership with Istituti Fisioterapici Ospitalieri

New START site at the IRCCS Istituto Nazionale Tumori Regina Elena will expand access to cancer clinical trials for patients in a major European oncology market

San Antonio, TX - 3 Nov 2026 The START Center for Cancer Research ("START"), the largest global network of fully dedicated early-phase oncology clinical trial sites, and Istituti Fisioterapici Ospitalieri ("IFO"), the public research hospital organization in Rome that includes IRCCS Istituto Nazionale Tumori Regina Elena, today announced a strategic partnership to establish a new START early-phase clinical trial site within the Regina Elena National Cancer Institute. The collaboration is intended to expand opportunities for eligible patients in Rome, the Lazio region and across Italy to novel investigational cancer therapies through clinical trials.

Recognized by the Italian Ministry of Health as an Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico (IRCCS), Regina Elena serves patients from Rome and the Lazio region, as well as patients referred from other regions of Italy and abroad. The institute combines cancer diagnosis, treatment and research, with expertise spanning major adult solid tumors, hematological malignancies and rare cancers. IFO also includes the San Gallicano Dermatological Institute, which specializes in dermatological diseases.

Italy records approximately 390,000 new cancer diagnoses a year, according to the 2025 edition of the national report I numeri del cancro in Italia, produced by AIOM and partner organizations. By bringing early-phase research into an established cancer institute, the partnership aims to make trial evaluation more closely connected with patients' existing oncology care.

Despite this significant cancer burden, Italy has a lower number of clinical trials relative to its population than several major Western European markets, highlighting an opportunity to expand clinical research activity and offer sponsors greater access to patients through established research institutions.

The partnership pairs START's experience running early-phase oncology trials with IFO's clinical and translational research capabilities. The Rome site will be START's first in Italy, extending its global community-based site network into an important oncology market. It will give patients, their families, and their physicians more clinical trial options as part of the continuum of care and give sponsors a new country through which to benefit from START's global network.

"Italy has a substantial cancer burden and world-class institutions, yet clinical trial activity relative to population remains lower than in several other major European markets," said Nick Slack, MBE, Chairman and CEO of START. "By partnering with IFO and the Regina Elena National Cancer Institute, an established leader in Italian cancer care and research, we can bring early-phase oncology research closer to patients across Italy and advance our mission of Hope Through Access."

"As a national cancer institute serving patients in Rome, Lazio, across Italy and internationally, we see this partnership as an opportunity to connect more patients with early-phase clinical research while strengthening the integration of care and innovation," said Livio De Angelis, Director General of IFO.

"Combining Regina Elena's multidisciplinary clinical and scientific expertise with START's early-phase trial network can create new opportunities for collaboration and clinical research across a broad range of cancers," said Giovanni Blandino, Scientific Director, IRCCS Istituto Nazionale Tumori Regina Elena.

Across its two institutes, IFO records on average about 10,000 inpatient and day-hospital admissions and more than 1.275 million outpatient services a year. Regina Elena belongs to the European Reference Network for adult solid cancers and is a member of Alleanza Contro il Cancro, the alliance of Italian IRCCS cancer centers.

START currently operates the largest global network of early-phase clinical trial sites, with more than 45 Principal Investigators across 17 locations in the United States and Europe. With nearly 1,000 active studies, START provides access to one of the most extensive portfolios of industry-sponsored early-phase cancer trials worldwide. The new IFO site will be fully integrated into the START network, with access to its global trial portfolio from day one.

About START

Deeply rooted in community oncology centers globally, The START Center for Cancer Research provides access to specialized preclinical and early-phase clinical trials of novel anti-cancer agents. START clinical trial sites have conducted more than 1,000 early-phase clinical trials, including for 50 therapies that were approved by the FDA or EMA. START represents the world's largest roster of early-phase principal investigators across its 17 clinical trial sites. Committed to accelerating passage from trials to treatments, START delivers hope to patients, families, and physicians around the world. Learn more at STARTresearch.com.

About Istituti Fisioterapici Ospitalieri

Istituti Fisioterapici Ospitalieri (IFO) is a public entity founded in 1926 that manages the Regina Elena National Cancer Institute (IRE) and the San Gallicano Dermatological Institute (ISG) in Rome. Since 1939, both institutes have been recognized as IRCCS, Italy's scientific institutes for hospitalization and care, with a focus on oncology and dermatology respectively. IFO combines patient care, biomedical research, and training, and treats patients at every stage of disease with precision medicine and personalized medical, surgical, radiotherapy, and nuclear medicine approaches. Learn more at ifo.it.

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