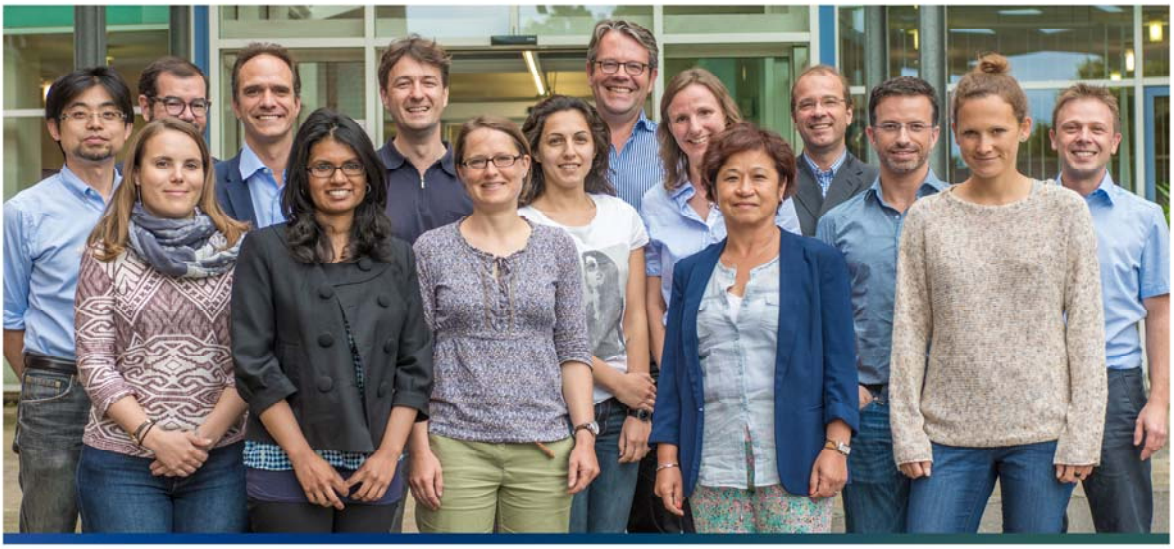

On July 11-12, 2016, the Institute of Medical Genetics and Applied Genomics hosted the kickoff meeting for decipherPD, a joint research initiative between France, Germany, and Canada founded by the ANR, BMBF, and CIHR. In this project, seven research groups bring together their expertise and seek to better understand the role of the epigenome in Parkinson's disease. "There is increasing evidence for the epigenome transmitting environmental signals into the unfolding of Parkinson's disease.", says Dr. Schulze-Hentrich who's coordinating the project. "With decipherPD, we aim to reveal part of the epigenomic fingerprint of Parkinson's and want to profile how the environment can modulate the epigenome and gene activity in the disease context."

Jointly with Dr. Kahle's lab at the local Hertie Institute and Dr. Outeiro's lab at the Göttingen University Medical Center, Dr. Schulze-Hentrich will address the epigenome-mediated principles along the gene-environment axis. Large cohorts of Parkinson's patients and their detailed epidemiological characterization become available through Dr. Brice's and Dr. Elbaz's lab at the INSERM in Paris and represent a highly valuable data source for the project. DNA methylation profiling efforts, spear-headed by Dr. Kobor's team at the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics, will complement various transcriptomic analyses of the consortium and get channeled to Dr. Gsponer's bioinformatics group at the Centre for High-Throughput Biology at UBC, where they will be integrated to a system's level description of disease dynamics between genome and epigenome. "I am echoing the vibrant atmosphere and enthusiasm of all partners during the kickoff meeting when I say that I am really excited to push the boundaries of our current understanding of Parkinson's and to generate new hope for patients and their families.", concludes Dr. Schulze-Hentrich.