



**Champalimaud
Foundation**

March 2010

- CF Hosts James Watson seminar in Portugal
- CF Researcher awarded €2.3 million ERC grant
- Champalimaud Day at LVPEI, India



James D. Watson, Nobel Laureate and Chairman of the CF Scientific Committee, speaks in Lisbon during the November 6th lecture.

James Watson in Portugal

Almost 700 people gathered in Lisbon on Friday, November 6th, to hear a lecture from the Nobel Laureate and co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, Dr. James Watson. During a one hour seminar, Dr. Watson, Chairman of the Champalimaud

Foundation's Scientific Committee, took the audience on a journey through the history of cancer research in parallel with the experiences and achievements from his own career. Speaking to a large number of students and young researchers, Watson laid out his expectations for the future by saying, "when I talk about curing cancer

today, I mean within the next ten years, not the next fifty years”.

In looking to fulfill his ambitions for cancer research, Dr. Watson plays an integral role in the scientific activities of the Champalimaud Foundation. Following the November 6th seminar Watson took advantage of his presence in Portugal to meet with the Foundation’s Board of Directors and Dr. Raghu Kalluri, Director of the Champalimaud Cancer Centre. Central to these discussions were the plans for the Foundation’s cancer research activities and the ongoing construction of the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown. The focus of the CF’s cancer programme will be the research, treatment and prevention of metastatic disease. Led by Dr. Kalluri, from Harvard Medical School, the programme is already active in three of the world’s leading universities in the USA – Harvard Medical School, Princeton University and Weill-Cornell Medical College.



Ricardo Brentani, Raghu Kalluri, and James Watson

All activities will eventually be incorporated into the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown, due to open in Lisbon on October 5th 2010. Plans for the opening of the Foundation’s cancer activities in Portugal continued in late 2009 with a recruitment call for oncologists, radiologists and pathologists.

The opening of the Centre is being prepared in consultation with Prof. Ricardo Brentani, a leading cancer specialist from the University of Sao Paulo and President of Brazil’s A.C. Camargo Cancer Hospital.

CF Scientist awarded prestigious European research grant

Zachery Mainen, Coordinator of the Champalimaud Neuroscience Programme, has been awarded one of the prestigious

and highly competitive European Research Council (ERC) Grants. The grant, with the value of 2.3 million euro, will run for a period of five years and recognises Mainen’s contribution to the field of Neuroscience. The funds will be used to elucidate the biological role of the neurotransmitter serotonin. The ERC is the most prominent European organism supporting scientific research.

Dr. Mainen and his group propose to shed light on one of the most enigmatic topics in Neuroscience - the exact role of serotonin in controlling vital behaviours such as eating, sleeping or breathing, and associated psychiatric disorders, such as anxiety, depression, migraine or eating disorders.



According to Mainen, “Anti-depressant drugs such as Prozac increase levels of serotonin in the brain, but little is known about what causes the brain to release its own serotonin or exactly how it affects the functioning of the nervous system. We are developing novel tools that will allow us to make definitive tests of serotonin function and gain insight into how this very important neurotransmitter actually functions in the brain. Ultimately, our studies may have clinical applications, as they may contribute to more effective drugs for behavioural disorders or ultimately to more advanced genetic therapies.”

The tools the team of scientists is developing, based on genetics, optical imaging and electrophysiology (recording the electrical activity of nerve cells), are a valuable resource for the entire scientific community, across the world.

Dr. Mainen’s ERC grant follows the 1.6 million euro, European Starting Grant

received by Champalimaud Investigator, Rui Costa, in 2009.

Third Champalimaud Day Seminar Held at LVPEI

On January 30th the Champalimaud Foundation celebrated the second anniversary of the C-TRACER facility by holding the Champalimaud Day Seminar at the LV Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI), in Hyderabad, India. During a fascinating afternoon of talks the symposium audience heard updates on the cutting-edge stem cell and eye genetics work of the C-TRACER facility and keynote talks were given by Janey Wiggs (Harvard Medical School), David Friedman (Wilmer Eye Institute), Borja Corcostegui (Institute of Ocular Microsurgery, Barcelona) and Brien Holden (International Centre for Eyecare Education),



Leonor Beleza, President of the Champalimaud Foundation, speaks at the LV Prasad Eye Institute, India

The Champalimaud Translational Centre of Eye Research (C-TRACER) was inaugurated at LVPEI, Hyderabad, on January 30, 2008, following an historic accord between the Champalimaud Foundation and LVPEI. Through this partnership both organisations contribute to a goal of translating the results of basic biological research on the human eye into the clinic, for treating patients with eye disorders. The C-TRACER partnership has already used stem cell therapy on over 700 needy patients to help restore their corneal vision. In addition, the C-TRACER team have carried out molecular genetic analysis in inherited eye disorders, and devised new gene-based diagnosis of certain forms of blindness.

Programme for Advanced Medical Education

Candidates are currently being solicited for the third edition of the Programme for Advanced Medical Education – supported by the Champalimaud Foundation, Gulbenkian Foundation, the Ministry of Health, and the Foundation for Science and Technology. The Programme, which is aimed at medical professionals who are strongly motivated by clinical or translational research, has a duration of three years, beginning on October 1st 2010. Further information is available online at <http://www.gulbenkian.pt/formacaomedica>.

Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown

Construction continues on the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown in Lisbon, Portugal. Due to open on October 5th 2010, the centre will be a multidisciplinary centre for translational research of excellence. The state of the art facilities for basic and clinical research and for teaching will foster front line research in molecular biology, genetics, immunology, neurosciences and behaviour, and oncology, as well as post-graduate and doctorate programmes, and the diagnosis and treatment of neurological and cancer patients.



The Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown. Lisbon, Portugal