



**Champalimaud
Foundation**

October 2009

- **2009 António Champalimaud Vision Award to HKI**
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Kathy Spahn (right), President and CEO of Helen Keller International, receives the 2009 trophy from Aníbal Cavaco Silva, President of the Portuguese Republic.

HKI wins 2009 António Champalimaud Vision Award

The 1,000,000 Euro (US\$1.4 million), 2009 António Champalimaud Vision Award has been awarded to Helen Keller

International (HKI) for its outstanding achievements in preventing blindness in the developing world. In particular, its decades-long leadership in the global control of vitamin A deficiency - the leading cause of childhood blindness and a significant contributor to childhood

mortality – has helped to save the sight and lives of millions of people around the world. The trophy was presented to **Kathy Spahn**, President and CEO of HKI, by the President of the Portuguese Republic, **Aníbal Cavaco Silva**, at a ceremony in Lisbon on September 4th. Also, in attendance were jury members, **Joshua Sanes**, and **Alfred Sommer**, who noted the outstanding contribution that HKI has made to tackling vitamin A deficiency in the developing world.



Prof. Alfred Sommer, President of the Award Jury

Helen Keller International has programmes in 22 countries that combat malnutrition, cataract, trachoma, onchocerciasis and refractive error, and has been instrumental in creating programmes to control vitamin A deficiency. HKI has played a critical role in developing vitamin A supplementation (VAS) programmes for children and currently offers these programs in 13 countries in Africa and 5 countries in Asia. The goal is to strengthen country-driven plans to achieve and sustain high VAS coverage by reaching more than 80 percent of targeted children with the vitamin capsules. It is estimated that these programs help to save the sight and lives of millions of children every year.

HKI addresses vitamin A deficiency through a multi-faceted approach using a variety of intervention tools that have a focus on promoting sustainability within communities. In Mozambique for example, HKI promotes the production and consumption of orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes, which are rich in vitamin A. HKI works directly with local communities and forges partnerships with key governmental, research and non-governmental partners to ensure long-term commitment. HKI provides training and supervision to agricultural extension

workers, community groups and farmers, collaborates with growers, women's groups and schools to distribute the plants, and develops communication strategies to encourage acceptance and consumption of these potatoes by growers and consumers.



About the Vision Award

The Antonio Champalimaud Vision Award was initiated by the Champalimaud Foundation in 2006 and referred to as the "Nobel Prize for Vision" by the former President of India, A.P.J. Kalam. In order to provide maximum support for the fight against blindness, the award concentrates both on practical blindness prevention (odd numbered years) and on scientific research (even numbered years). The award is given to recipients for their outstanding achievements and award funds are to be used in any way that furthers and amplifies the recipients' proven efforts.

The Jury Panel for this prestigious award is comprised of leading international scientists and prominent public figures involved in meeting the needs of the developing world. They are: Alfred Sommer, Paul Sieving, Jacques Delors, Amartya Sen, Carla Shatz, Joshua Sanes, Mark Bear, Gullapalli Rao, José Cunha-Vaz, António Guterres, and Susumu Tonegawa.

The entry period for the 2010 award – focusing on outstanding vision research – opened on October 1st 2009. Entry forms and further information is available at <http://www.fchampalimaud.org/vision-award/guidelines/>.

Construction of the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown – 1 year gone and one year to go

October 5th 2008 will mark the end of the first year of construction of the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown.

Since the first stone was laid by the Prime Minister of Portugal, José Sócrates, on October 5th 2008, the construction team have continued to make great strides. The initial months of the project involved clearing the space in order to lay the foundations for main buildings. Once this was done the structure of building A, which will house the Foundation's research activities, quickly took shape. Likewise, the construction of Building B, which will house an auditorium, restaurant, exhibition area and the Foundation's administrative offices, has moved forward rapidly in recent months. Once complete, the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown will also comprise an open-air amphitheatre and a public access area corresponding to 50% of the total area of the site.

The centre will be a multidisciplinary institution for translational research of excellence. It will house the best possible conditions to attract and retain the best researchers, academics and medical doctors from Portugal and abroad in the fields of neurosciences and cancer research. In this context, the Centre will include laboratories for basic and clinical research, an ambulatory care centre, a vivarium, an auditorium, conference rooms, teaching facilities and an exhibition area.

The state of the art facilities for basic and clinical research and for teaching will foster front line research as well as post-graduate and doctorate programmes, and the diagnosis and treatment of neurological and cancer patients.

The Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown will open on October 5th 2010. Construction can be followed online at http://tv.fchampalimaud.org/gallery_en.htm.



CF scientist awarded prestigious European Starting Grant

Rui Costa, Principal Investigator in the Champalimaud Neuroscience Programme at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (IGC), in Portugal, is one of only a small number of recipients of the prestigious European Research Council Starting Grants, out of 2503 applicants for the 2009 edition of this flagship award scheme. The grant, totalling close to 1.6 million Euros, for a period of five years, will allow Rui Costa's young research team to pursue their research into the neurological mechanisms underlying goal-directed decision making behaviour, versus habit-based responses.

Explaining the aims of his research programme, Dr. Costa mentioned that 'We are daily, constantly, having to make decisions and select appropriate actions to obtain specific goals. Actions may be selected on the basis of their consequences - for example, driving work with the aim of getting home. This type of goal-directed behaviour demands constant control and monitoring of those goals and consequences - an effortful endeavour. However, if we repeat the same action often enough, it may become automatic, that is, a habit, and the effort it requires may be reduced.'



Dr. Rui Costa, of the Champalimaud Neuroscience Programme

'Habitual responses do not need constant evaluation of the consequences, and are often at play even when we wish to do something different - for example, we may wish to drive home from work, but end up somewhere else. There is increasing evidence that the neural circuits underlying goal-directed and habit-based decisions are different. Our aim is to establish the

differences between these neural processes, both at the cellular and molecular level. To achieve this, we will be using cutting-edge molecular biology and electrophysiology (recording electrical activity in the brain) techniques. If we could unravel the processes whereby goal-directed and habit behaviour are determined, we would be closer to understanding not only decision-making processes, but also, obsessive behaviour disorders', added Rui.

Indeed, this research may provide insight into decision-making on a day-to-day level. For example, when we decide to make a certain type of investment, or a certain purchase, why we opt for a different behaviour or, on the contrary, stick to a routine. On the other hand, findings in this area may shed some light on the mechanisms underlying a range of psychiatric disorders, namely those involving compulsive or addictive behaviours.

CF Supports Metastasis Summer School

In early September the Champalimaud Foundation was pleased to support the Metafight-TUMIC-SFMET Metastasis Summer School, in Portugal. Cancer specialists from Europe and the USA gathered in Sesimbra to discuss molecular and cellular dissection of the metastatic process in invasive tumours. In particular, the conference focused on the core invasive machinery, the cancer stem cell contribution to this process and the microenvironment for metastasis formation.

The leaders of all three Champalimaud Metastasis Programme laboratories were in Portugal to participate in the summer school. **Raghu Kalluri**, from Harvard Medical School, **David Lyden**, from Weill-Cornell Medical College, and **Yibin Kang**, from Princeton University represented the Foundation during the five days of meetings and seminars. In addition, the Foundation was happy to welcome all participants to a cocktail reception on Sunday, September 6th, at the construction site of the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown.