

## INDUSTRIALIST'S BEQUEST

# €500m medical research body to be set up in Lisbon

By Peter Wise in Lisbon and Clive Cookson in London

European medical scientists, whose funding has fallen behind US researchers, will receive a substantial competitive boost tomorrow when a charitable foundation to support research in fields ranging from stem cells to neuroscience is launched with a €500m (\$585m, £334m) endowment in Lisbon.

António Champalimaud, a Portuguese industrialist who died last year at the age of 86, bequeathed a quarter of his €2bn estate to set up the new foundation.

Unlike the US, Europe has very few large foundations that concentrate on medical science, besides Britain's huge Wellcome Trust.

Eye health will be a particular focus of the foundation's activities, reflecting the fact that Mr Champalimaud, who was Portugal's richest individual, lost his sight in his final years.

The foundation plans not only to give grants for ophthalmology research, but also to create a €1m annual award in this field.

"Generosity of this magnitude is fantastic news for us," said Gullapalli Rao, president of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.

Leonor Beleza, president of the Champalimaud Foundation, said it would focus on connecting pure scientific investigation with applied clinical research through multi-disciplinary teams.

Ms Beleza, a former health minister who met Mr Champalimaud only once, was named in his will as the foundation's president for life.

"In the spirit of Mr Champalimaud, we will be ambitious and innovative," she said. "We want to make a real impact in new and difficult areas of research where

European capacities can be improved."

Stem cell research and its clinical applications for Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and spinal injury were of particular interest to the foundation as well as several branches of neuroscience, she said.

The foundation expects to set up its own research institute in Portugal, possibly involving partners such as universities, hospitals and other foundations, said Ms Beleza.

But it would be European in scope and open to financing research anywhere in the world.

Specific decisions on research priorities will be taken tomorrow when trustees meet for the first time. They include Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, and Simone Veil, former president of the European parliament.

The main scientific orientation will come from António Coutinho, a distinguished Portuguese immunologist who runs the Gulbenkian Science Institute in Lisbon, and António Damásio, the US-based neuroscientist and author of *Descartes' Error* and other works on emotional intelligence.

The Champalimaud Foundation is likely to work closely with the Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal's largest, which has a €2.4bn asset base. But the Gulbenkian focuses on art and education, applying only 12 per cent of its funds to science.

A small part of the Champalimaud Foundation's endowment will come from the sale of its founder's art and furniture collection, which is expected to fetch about £15m (\$27m, €22.3m) at an auction at Christie's in London next month.

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