

Chair Ilídio Pinho – Neurosciences

Research in the health sciences domain is, these days, one of the most transversal activities at the University of Aveiro, having the contribution of several departments, schools and research units that translates itself in knowledge creation and technology transfer from the university to the society. In line with this and as a strategic approach in order to further promote health sciences research, iBiMED, a new multidisciplinary and interdepartmental research unit that brings together biologists, biochemists, physicists, mathematicians and medical doctors was created in 2014. But the bet on health sciences research started years before, in 2012, with the signature of a protocol between UA and the Foundation Ilídio Pinho aiming to fund neuroscience research at UA. This financial support resulted in the launch of a new chair – chair Ilídio Pinho – Neurosciences.

The chair was officially presented to the community during the 41st University anniversary ceremony, which took place on December 15th 2014. The ceremony counted with the presence of Philippe Pierre, immunologist, currently director of research at the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) – Centre d'Immunologie de Marseille-Luminy and the main holder of the chair. The chair will also count with the contribution of Evelina Gatti, research coordinator in the same institution.

In Marseille, these scientists coordinate a team of 15 scientists, which is focused on the dendritic cell biology particularly in the alterations that occur in the activation of these cells of the immune system by pathogenic organisms.

Philippe Pierre concluded his PhD in 1994, at EMBL, Heidelberg (Ger) and Université de Genève (CH). He then moved to Yale University School of Medicine (USA) where he did his post-doctoral studies and stayed as associate research scientist until 2000, when joined Centre d'Immunologie de Marseille-Luminy as group leader, where later he became director. During his career, Pierre has published more than 60 papers in international high impact peer reviewed journals, such as Nature, Cell, Nature Methods, Immunity, Journal of Cell Biology, PNAS, EMBO Journal and Plos Pathogens, some of which as joint publications with Manuel Santos – director of SACS and iBiMED - team, as result of more than 10 years of collaboration. He developed an innovative technology (SUnSET) a nonradioactive method to monitor protein synthesis. He was awarded with a prize from the Fondation Schlumberger pour l'Éducation et la Recherche (2000) and also with the EMBO Young Investigator Award (2003).

Evelina Gatti concluded her PhD in Biology and Biotechnology at Università degli Studi di Milano. She did her post-doctoral training at Yale University and in 2000 she co-founded the Dendritic Cell Biology Lab, at Centre d'Immunologie de Marseille-Luminy, together with Pierre. She has over 45 publications in international peer high impact journals, related to the molecular mechanisms regulating antigen processing and presentation in human and murine antigen presenting cells and the role of ubiquitination in the cell biology of dendritic cells as well as of non-professional antigen presenting cells.

In the frame of the neurosciences chair, these experts intend to expand their research interests, relating it to the subjects that are studied by the iBiMED team, namely the relationship of the biochemical stress response mechanisms that are activated during cellular decay (e.g. during ageing) and the induction of innate immunological responses. Furthermore, this will provide a strong input in what UA internationalization is concerned and will strengthen the French-Portuguese alliance, in articulation between CNRS and the Université of Aix-Marseille.

