A CNIC researcher awarded two projects of the European Diabetes Society

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Dra. Ivana Nikolić studies the role of T cells in the development of diseases associated with obesity

The postdoctoral researcher of the National Cardiovascular Research Center (CNIC), Ivana Nikolić, has been awarded two projects of the European Diabetes Society (EFSD) to study the role of T cells in the development of diseases associated with obesity: the “EFSD / Lilly Young Investigator Award” and the “EFSD Rising Star Fellowship”. The EFSD / Lilly Young Investigator Research Award Program consists of a grant of 50,000 euros, while in the case of the EFSD Rising Star Fellowship Program, funding will be 30,000 euros. Previously, the researcher had obtained the 2017 EFSD Lilly Research Fellowship Program, endowed with a grant of 50,000 euros.

Dr. Nikolić received the EFSD / Lilly Young Investigator Award and the EFSD Rising Star Scholarship during the "EFSD Rising Star Symposium" sponsored by Novo Nordisk at the prestigious congress of the European Diabetes Association held in Barcelona.

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Obesity, which has become a global epidemic, is associated with the increase in pathologies such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Obesity produces a chronic inflammation that causes many of these secondary diseases. And, although in recent years special attention has been given to the role of innate immunity in this process, there is much less knowledge of how acquired immunity participates in chronic inflammation. "The purpose of the project - explains Ivana Nikolić - is to study whether the activation of the cells of the acquired inflammation, the one which helps us to generate antibodies, can be responsible for diseases associated with obesity."

Ivana Nikolić graduated with a PhD in Immunology from the University of Belgrade (Serbia) in 2014. In 2015 she joined Dr. Guadalupe Sabio's lab at the CNIC thanks to the FP7-People Marie Sklodowka - Curie Actions, MSCA - COFUND talent recruitment grant. These scholarships were intended to attract outstanding foreign scientists to the CNIC at an intermediate stage in their career so that they could develop it in Spain.

Talent Recruitment

Dr. Nikolić is one of the examples of the success of this talent recruitment program. So far, she has obtained three EFSD projects to study the molecular mechanisms of obesity.

As a result, for example, during these years she has demonstrated the relevant role of **p38gamma** and delta in the infiltration of neutrophils during the development of fatty liver. These results suggest that the inhibition of these kinases could be used for the treatment of fatty liver, a disease for which, so far, there is no treatment and affects one third of the world's adult population.

With her previous EFSD / Lilly project, the CNIC researcher was able to demonstrate the main role of p38delta in thermogenesis and, therefore, that its activation in brown adipose tissue could be used as a treatment against obesity. During this time, she has been the lead author of different articles published in PLoS Biology or the EMBO Journal.

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