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The ImnovAth project seeks an innovative approach to treat atherosclerosis

The ImnovAth project, led by Dr. David Sancho, head of the Immunobiology Laboratory at the National Center for Cardiovascular Research (CNIC), has been selected by the European Research Council (ERC) for its Proof of Concept grants, receiving funding of €150,000. ImnovAth will investigate an alternative therapy for atherosclerosis focused on inhibiting a new therapeutic target. This new target may serve to develop an independent or complementary therapy to current treatments for atherosclerosis, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.

Atherosclerosis is a leading cause of death worldwide, and current treatments are insufficient to address future cardiovascular events. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find new complementary treatments.

ImnovAth is a continuation of Dr. David Sancho's MITOMAD project and is carried out as an individual project at the CNIC. In the context of the MITOMAD project, funded by the ERC, "we found a **microbiota-derived metabolite** that affects the development of innate and adaptive immunity. Subsequently, we discovered that this metabolite is associated with and causes atherosclerosis, and blocking the interaction of this metabolite with its cellular receptor prevents the progression of atherosclerosis."

Dr. Sancho explains that ImnovAth aims to develop these innovative results "to complement our preclinical findings with an existing pharmacological agent that blocks the interaction pathway of this microbiota-derived metabolite with its cellular receptor. If this proof of concept is successful, the idea is to initiate clinical trials and develop a drug that can be commercialized."

The main objectives of ImnovAth include validating that this **blockade is effective in treating atherosclerosi**s. Dr. Sancho details that the toxicity/tolerability of the existing pharmacological agent and the effect/efficacy of blocking this metabolite/receptor axis with the pharmacological agent alone or in combination with other current standard treatments for atherosclerosis will be studied in a preclinical setting.

The Proof of Concept grants awarded by the ERC help bridge the gap between groundbreaking research results and the early stages of commercialization. "Courage and skill are needed to take an idea from the laboratory to the business world. These grants are designed to enable researchers to take this step and transform pioneering research into tangible innovations," says Iliana Ivanova, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth.

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