

## The Fundación Occident's Jesús Serra Research Awards recognise research into obesity and healthy ageing

- *The Director of the Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Marina Pollán, closed the Jesús Serra Research Awards ceremony stressing the need to make a commitment to young scientists.*
- *In its sixth edition, these awards recognised the researchers María Mittelbrunn of the Severo Ochoa Molecular Biology Centre (CBM-CSIC-UAM) and Andreea Ciudin from the Vall d'Hebron Research Institute.*

The Fundación Occident's Jesús Serra Research Awards gala brought together scientists, physicians, journalists and patient associations, among other guests, in a solemn and informative ceremony, which was brought to a perfect close by Marina Pollán, Director of the Instituto de Salud Carlos III. Every year, these awards recognise two young researchers who make outstanding contributions to research on food, nutrition and health, with a prize of 50,000 euros for each winner. This year, under the theme of "Feeding health is everyone's business", the gala once again lauded the most cutting-edge research in food, nutrition and health.

"Thanks to the richness and diversity of our diet, Spain is a key country in terms of food research. But we are losing our healthy eating habits, directly impacting problems such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases. I congratulate the Fundación Occident for focusing on this challenge and supporting young researchers, who are the future of science and society," said Marina Pollán.

María Mittelbrunn, tenured scientist at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and director of the Immunometabolism and Inflammation Laboratory at the Severo Ochoa Molecular Biology Centre (CSIC-UAM), received the award for her research on how to rejuvenate the immune system and delay the onset of age-related diseases. Specifically, she studies T cells, key immune system components that with age suffer from changes in their metabolism that affect their functionality, causing chronic inflammation. The prize will allow María and her team to invest in new nutritional strategies that stimulate the metabolism of T-lymphocytes. The aim is to reverse the deterioration of T cells and immune systems, thus delaying age-related diseases.

"This award is a very important recognition for me and my team. It encourages us to continue researching how diet can rejuvenate our immune system and, perhaps, delay the chronic inflammation associated with diseases such as cancer or cardiovascular diseases" María Mittelbrunn, winner of the Jesús Serra Research Awards in the basic category, declared at the ceremony.

The prize awarded to Andreea Ciudin, senior researcher at the Diabetes and Metabolism Research Group at Vall d'Hebron Research Institute (VHIR) and Coordinator of the Obesity Unit of the Vall d'Hebron University Hospital, recognises her outstanding career in research, specifically in the treatment of obesity, where she has explored new ways of understanding the origins and development of this disease. With the support of these Awards, she can continue to work on the development of software with artificial intelligence that accurately assesses body composition and energy expenditure at rest, which will allow the identification of phenotypes with different patterns of obesity in patients, extracting information from the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and computed tomography

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### About Fundación Occident

Fundación Occident, formerly Fundación Jesús Serra, is a private non-profit entity, created in memory of Jesús Serra Santamans, a renowned businessman and patron, who was the founder of GCO (Grupo Catalana Occidente). Its activity consists of developing and supporting initiatives in the fields of research, business and teaching, social action, sport, and promotion of the arts, with a common objective: responsible commitment to society.

images. This will open the door to an integrated approach to obesity, including personalised nutritional therapies, in order to improve adherence to early treatment and thus prevent the appearance of comorbidities associated with obesity.

"For me and my team, this prize means continuing a line of research that we have been working on for a long time already. We know that there are many types of obesity, and this prize will allow us to characterise them, and to make further advances in diagnosing and treating them," commented Andreea Ciudin, winner of the Jesús Serra Research Awards in the clinical category.

### **A day to celebrate research on food, nutrition and health, and also World Children's Day**

The gala, hosted by TV presenter Jorge Fernández, brought together more than 150 researchers and nutritionists in the El Beatriz Madrid auditorium, representing health and academic organisations and associations, collaborators with the Fundación Jesús Serra, and members of the general public interested in food, nutrition and health.

"At Fundación Occident we firmly believe in the need to shine a light on young research talent in Spain. And on a day like today, on which we also celebrate childhood, this research is even more meaningful, because good research and good food have an impact on the future of millions of children," said Laura Halpern, president of Fundación Occident.

On the occasion of World Children's Day, which is promoted by the United Nations every year, Fundación Occident also wanted to hear young voices at the event. Amina Jaber and Rose Benitez, two young people aged 12 and 14, went up onto the stage to interview the winners. Amina and Rose were selected by Fundación Balía, an organisation that promotes the social inclusion of minors at risk of social exclusion through social and educational assistance and prevention programmes, and with which Fundación Occident has been collaborating since 2001.

The day's proceedings also featured a pre-event workshop entitled "Obesity prevention: Is it possible?" moderated by journalist Pampa Molina, and featured the award winner Andreea Ciudin and Santi Gómez, global director of Research and Programmes at the Gasol Foundation. During the event, it was concluded that there are many types of obesity and that the social determinants of health are key to better understanding and preventing this disease.

[More about the awards](#)

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