

Research Awards

Jesús Serra

8th Edition

Special Award for Scientific Communication

Federico Halpern

2th Edition

Dossier



About the Research Awards Jesús Serra

The annual Research Awards Jesús Serra, held for the first time in 2018, are an initiative of Fundación Occident, of GCO. This year, 2026, it celebrates its eight edition.



These Awards recognise the careers of young researchers working in Spain and support projects that represent significant advances in food, nutrition and health research. Two prizes are awarded each year, in the categories of basic and clinical research, with an endowment of 50,000 euros each.

With these Awards, Fundación Occident not only honors the most outstanding researchers in our country, giving them the recognition and visibility they deserve, but also actively contributes to building a healthier society — in line with the recommendations of leading organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) — and to safeguarding the well-being of future generations.

Furthermore, in 2025, the **Special Award for Scientific Communication Federico Halper** was included for the first time as part of the Research Awards Jesús Serra, with the aim of recognizing and promoting rigorous, evidence-based scientific communication in the fields of food, nutrition, and health. Through this initiative, Fundación Occident reinforces its commitment not only to excellence in research but also to high-quality scientific communication that helps improve narratives on these topics in the media, clinical practice, and society.

Fundación Occident

Our Foundation was established within GCO in 1998 with the aim of channeling the philanthropic activities that the insurance company had been carrying out for an entire century. It was originally founded as Fundación Catalana Occidente, and following the death of the company's founder, Jesús Serra, in 2006, it changed its name in tribute to his legacy. Today, under the new name Fundación Occident, it preserves the same spirit that has characterized it to date and continues to promote its five areas of activity: research, education, cultural projects, sports activities, and social initiatives—strengthening Grupo Occident's commitment to society year after year.

Among its projects, numerous initiatives stand out that aim to enhance the education and training of children and young people, support the musical careers of emerging talents, promote poetry, and provide programs for people with disabilities in adapted sports. In the field of research, beyond these Awards, the Foundation supports the careers of young researchers as well as cutting-edge studies in biomedicine and astrophysics. More information at: fundacionoccident.org.

Promoting health through diet and nutrient metabolism and science communication

Consistently, the research focuses on healthy eating habits and lifestyles to prevent numerous diseases or improve the clinical management of conditions such as ischemic heart disease, cancer, and obesity. Furthermore, as we uncover the complexities of nutrient metabolism, we gain a deeper understanding of their role in health and disease.

Through the Jesús Serra Research Awards, this foundation is committed to both advancing research and deepening our understanding of how food and nutrition can enhance the lives of millions of people in Spain and worldwide.

As with other Foundation programs, these Awards focus on young researchers, because they are who are already shaping the future. In the words of Laura Halpern, President of Fundación Occident:



Supporting new generations of scientists is key to ensuring the well-being of future generations.



Lina Badimon, President of the Jury for these awards and an international expert in cardiovascular health, explains that:



The Mediterranean diet has proven to be a great ally in reducing early mortality. In the case of cardiovascular health, we have even seen that it can prevent repeated heart attacks and other cardiovascular events.



Furthermore, with these Awards, we also promote science communication, which plays an essential role in food, nutrition, and health research. It transforms complex findings into clear and accessible information, facilitates evidence-based decision-making, broadens the impact of discoveries, and reinforces public trust in science. Through rigorous communication, research breakthroughs do not only reach physicians, patients, and educators, but also inspire new initiatives, foster best practices, and contribute to improving the health of the population.

Research Awards Jesús Serra: call for applications 2026

8th Edition

Purpose: To recognize the careers and research projects of two young researchers in Spain who have made outstanding contributions in the fields of food, nutrition, and health research.

Number of Awards: 2, one for basic research and one for clinical research.*

Financial Endowment: 100,000 gross, divided between the two categories (basic and clinical), with €50,000 allocated to each. This endowment must be invested in expenses associated with the research project.

Candidates: Researchers who have not reached 46 years of age** on the closing date of this call, with a minimum of 3 years of research experience in Spain.

Scientific Endorsement: Candidates must be endorsed by at least one support letter from a project supervisor or a recognized professional affiliated with universities, hospitals, or research centers in Spain.

Application Submission: Applications must be completed in Spanish or English and submitted exclusively through the website: <https://fundacionoccident.org/eng/awards-research>.

Deadline: Applications can be submitted from March 10 until April 28, inclusive.

Jury: Composed of professionals of recognized prestige in the fields of medicine and biology, from centers of research excellence.

Announcement of Winners: The results will be published on the website <https://fundacionoccident.org/eng/awards-research> and presented at the ceremony in November 2026.

*If the research project accompanying the application is in the pre-clinical phase, the category should reflect the long-term objectives of this line of research.

**The age of 46 may be exceeded if the candidate has temporarily interrupted his/her career as a result of the birth or adoption of children and their care during the first months of life. These months of extension must be supported by relevant official documentation.

Special Award for Scientific Communication Federico Halpern: call for applications 2026

2nd Edition

Purpose: To recognize the work of journalists, communicators, researchers, and content creators who stand out for their commitment to evidence-based information and communication on food, nutrition, and health.

Collaborators: Spanish Association for Scientific Communication (AEC2) and National Association of Health Journalists (ANIS).

Number of Awards: 2, one for New Formats and one for Traditional Media.

Financial Endowment: €5,000 gross, divided between the two categories (New Formats and Traditional Media), with €2,500 allocated to each.

Candidates: Candidates for these awards must be nominated by experts in food, nutrition, and health research or by peers in the field of scientific and health communication.

Nominators: Nominations can be submitted by any of the following professionals: Researchers working at Spanish research centers, hospitals, and/or universities.

- Researchers working at Spanish universities, hospitals, and/or research centers.
- Staff from communication departments at Spanish universities, hospitals, and/or research centers.
- Journalists with a contractual or freelance collaboration with a Spanish media outlet.
- Members of the Spanish Association for Scientific Communication (AEC2) and the National Association of Health Journalists (ANIS).
- Members of other scientific communication associations in Spain.

Application Submission: Applications must be completed in Spanish and submitted exclusively through the website: fundacionoccident.org/premios-investigacion.

Deadline: Applications can be submitted from March 10 until April 28, inclusive.

Jury: Composed of professionals with extensive experience in research, scientific communication, and health.

Announcement of Winners: Results will be published on the website fundacionoccident.org/premios-investigacion and presented at the ceremony in November 2026.

Awardees 2018 – 2025

Through the Research Awards Jesús Serra, we are building a research community aimed not only at promoting new research activities but also at fostering rigorous and accessible dissemination of the benefits that a healthy diet can have on our health.

Research Awards Jesús Serra

Basic Research



Guadalupe Sabio

Principal Investigator at the Spanish National Cancer Research Center (CNIO).
1st Edition

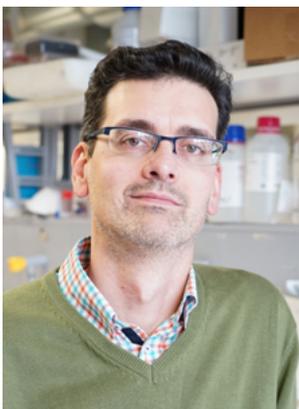
Sabio leads a research team studying how metabolic disorders and obesity trigger other secondary diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Her award-winning project analysed protein kinases and their involvement in metabolism, cell proliferation, differentiation, and apoptosis.



Salvador Aznar

ICREA researcher at the Institute for Research in Biomedicine of Barcelona (IRB). **2nd Edition**

Aznar investigates the role of adult stem cells in ageing and cancer development. Recently, his team discovered the enhancing effect of certain fatty acids on metastasis, which is the cause of most cancer deaths. The award recognises his work in understanding the effect of consuming these fatty acids on cancer.



Rubén Nogueiras

Researcher at the Center for Research in Molecular Medicine and Chronic Diseases (CIMUS), University of Santiago de Compostela. **3rd Edition**

Nogueiras is an expert in the molecular mechanisms involved in the development of obesity, one of the pandemic diseases with the greatest economic, social, and healthcare costs. The award recognizes his research on the interactions of the central nervous system and peripheral organs in regulating energy balance, as well as the triggers for the development of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, whose prevalence is increasing year after year.



Arkaitz Carracedo

Ikerbasque Research Professor at Center for Cooperative Research in Biosciences (CIC bioGUNE). **4th Edition**

Carracedo investigates the metabolic basis of prostate cancer and the role of polyamines in cancer cell aggressiveness. The award-winning project aims to understand the molecular effects of polyamines in tumor and non-tumor cells and define their therapeutic potential to regulate their synthesis in our bodies or even refine their use as dietary supplements.



Manuel Irimia

ICREA Research Professor at Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) and the Center for Genomic Regulation (CRG). **5th Edition**

Irimia leads the research group studying the role that microexons, which are tiny DNA sequences, play in insulin secretion and the development of diabetes. The award-winning project seeks to explore their use to define new molecular targets and therapeutic strategies for diabetes, thus contributing to reducing the disease's comorbidities and the healthcare burden.



María Mittelbrunn

Senior Scientist at the Severo Ochoa Center for Molecular Biology (CBM-CSIC-UAM). **6th Edition**

Mittelbrunn is researching how to delay the ageing of the immune system. Her award-winning project seeks to develop nutritional strategies that optimize the metabolism of T lymphocytes, key cells of the immune system, to control chronic inflammation and delay the onset of disease.



Jordi Mayneris-Perxachs

Head of Research Group at the Institut d'Investigació Biomèdica de Girona (IDIBGI). **7th Edition**

Mayneris-Perxachs focuses his research on microbiota–brain communication and its role in obesity, cognitive function, and mental health. The awarded project explores how a common bacterium of the gut microbiota — with natural probiotic properties — and the compounds it produces could help prevent or treat food addiction.

Clinical Research



Pablo Pérez

Scientific Director of the Maimonides Institute for Biomedical Research of Córdoba (IMIBIC). **1st Edition**

Pérez is an expert in clinical nutrigenomics, specifically in gene-environment interactions and their effects on diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The award recognizes his studies on the effects of the Mediterranean diet on improving mild cognitive impairment.



Raúl Zamora

Principal Investigator at the Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBELL). **2nd Edition**

Zamora researches the effect of polyphenols on the development of diseases such as cancer and obesity. The award recognizes his career and, in particular, this work in which, together with his team, he has seen that fruits and vegetables, rich in polyphenols, could play a key role in weight control in obese people, as well as in improving other health parameters associated with weight-loss treatments.



Borja Ibáñez

Scientific Director of the Spanish National Center for Cardiovascular Research (CNIC). **3rd Edition**

Ibáñez is an expert in acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, and cardiotoxicity associated with oncological therapies. The Award recognizes his research on the role of diet in the prevention and treatment of these conditions, as well as his leadership in a clinical trial aimed at the early detection of cardiac damage in cancer patients.



Mª Carmen Collado

Senior Scientist at the Institute of Agrochemistry and Food Technology (IATA-CSIC). **3rd Edition**

Collado investigates the associations between the human microbiota, nutrition, and health in the maternal-child relationship. Specifically, with the award, her team aims to understand the impact on the health of children and future adults of exposure to perinatal, environmental, and genetic factors, as well as to specific components of breast milk, during the first 1,000 days of life, from conception to age 2.



Fàtima Crispi

Physician and researcher at the Maternal-Fetal Medicine Center at Hospital Clínic of Barcelona and Hospital Sant Joan de Déu. **4th Edition**

Crispi studies babies born with low birth weight, a condition associated with high perinatal morbidity and mortality and with consequences for their cardiovascular health. Through dietary interventions in pregnant women, Crispi and her team saw a reduction in the number of low birth weight babies, as well as the associated cardiovascular damage. Now, with the award, she wants to verify whether the cardiovascular benefits persist years after birth.



Maira Bes-Rastrollo

Research Professor at the University of Navarra (UNAV). **5th Edition**

Bes-Rastrollo is an expert in nutritional epidemiology. Specifically, her research focuses on understanding how different dietary patterns influence chronic diseases and mortality, as these diseases are the leading cause of death worldwide and are partly the result of poor nutrition. The award-winning project aims to evaluate the proper adherence to a vegan diet and prevent potential health risks.



Andreea Ciudin

Principal Investigator at the Vall d'Hebron Research Institute (VHIR) and Unit Coordinator at Vall d'Hebron University Hospital. **6th Edition**

Ciudin, an obesity expert, is developing artificial intelligence capable of assessing body composition and accurately diagnosing the disease. With this award, she and her team aim to go a step further and use this software to identify different obesity patterns and personalize nutritional therapies to help combat it.



Ana Belén Crujeiras

Head of Research Group at the Instituto de Investigaciones Sanitarias de Santiago – Servicio Gallego de Saúde (IDIS-SERGAS). **7th Edition**

Ana Belén studies how diet and nutritional status modulate health through epigenetic mechanisms, with a particular focus on obesity and its comorbidities, including cancer. Her project aims to demonstrate, for the first time, whether weight loss can improve oncological treatments in women with obesity, advancing personalized medicine and prevention.

Special Award for Scientific Communication Federico Halpern

New formats



Beatriz Robles y Laura Caorsi

Robles is a food technologist and science communicator specializing in nutrition. Caorsi is a journalist specialized in health. **1st Edition**

Robles and Caorsi stand out for their outreach work in food and health, collaborating with media outlets such as Maldita.es, RTVE, El País, and Eroski Consumer, and publishing books on the subject. Together, they host the podcast “A la guerra con una cuchara” (“To War with a Spoon”) and take part in training, outreach, and institutional advisory projects, promoting mindful and sustainable eating habits.

Medios tradicionales



Cristina Sáez

Science journalist specializing in health. **1st Edition**

For more than twenty years, Sáez has built a career as a journalist specializing in science and health, focusing on the impact of biomedical and nutrition research on everyday life. She has contributed to La Vanguardia, Ara, National Geographic, and Agencia SINC, covering topics such as the microbiota, nutrition, aging, and prevention. She is recognized for the rigor of her science communication and her human-centered approach, and she has received several science journalism awards across various national media sectors.

The Jury: A Guarantee of Excellence for the Awards

The jury for the Research Awards Jesús Serra is chaired by Lina Badimon and composed of six renowned scientists and physicians who serve as permanent members of the jury, along with the scientists who were awarded in the previous edition of these awards.

The jury for the Special Award is composed of four professionals with extensive experience in research, scientific communication, and health, who serve as permanent members of the jury, together with the communicators awarded in the previous edition.



Jury of the Research Awards Jesús Serra



Lina Badimon

Scientific Director of the Cardiovascular Research Foundation for the Promotion of Health and Innovation (FICSI)

President of the Jury

Badimon is internationally recognized for her contributions to the study of cardiovascular and cardiometabolic diseases, specifically atherosclerosis, thrombosis, and ischaemic diseases.



Arkaitz Carracedo

Ikerbasque Research Professor at Center for Cooperative Research in Biosciences (CIC bioGUNE)

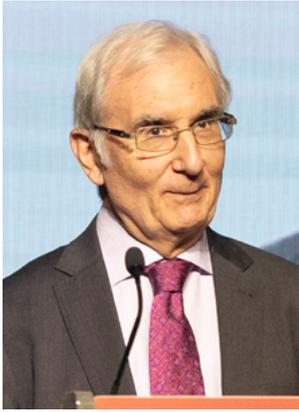
Carracedo researches the metabolic basis of prostate cancer and the role of polyamines in cancer cell aggressiveness. In 2022, he was one of the winners of the Research Awards Jesús Serra



Borja Ibáñez

Scientific Director of the Spanish National Center for Cardiovascular Research (CNIC) and cardiologist at the Hospital Fundación Jiménez Díaz in Madrid

Ibáñez is an expert in the treatment of acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, and cardiotoxicity associated with cancer treatments. In 2021, he was one of the winners of the Research Awards Jesús Serra.



Pedro Mata

Founder and President of the Spanish Foundation for Familial Hypercholesterolemia

Mata is a specialist in internal medicine. His research focuses on the epidemiological, clinical, and molecular study of familial hypercholesterolemia, a field in which he leads the SAFEHEART cohort study in Spain. He is also a co-founder and member of the board of directors of the International Familial Hypercholesterolemia Foundation.



Mercedes Rincón

Professor of Immunology, University of Colorado at Denver and Professor Emeritus at the University of Vermont

Rincón researches the immune response to autoimmune diseases as well as mechanisms of resistance to cancer treatments. She is the co-founder of the startup Mitotherapeutix and the inventor of two patents and four additional patents.



Guadalupe Sabio

Principal Investigator at the Spanish National Cancer Research Center (CNIO)

Sabio leads the research team studying how metabolic disorders and obesity trigger other secondary diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. In 2018, she was one of the first winners of the Research Awards Jesús Serra.

Jury of the Special Award for Scientific Communication Federico Halpern



Gema Revuelta

President of the Spanish Association for Scientific Communication (AEC2) and Director of the Center for Studies in Science, Communication, and Society at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (CCS-UPF)

Physician and researcher specializing in scientific and health communication. She directs the Center for Studies in Science, Communication, and Society, and since 2025, she is President of AEC2, promoting responsible science outreach and communication training to improve public perception of research.



Patricia Matey

Board Member of the National Association of Health Journalists (ANIS) and Journalist Specialized in Health, Medicine, and Biomedicine

Matey is a journalist specializing in health, medicine, and biosciences, with over 30 years of experience. She has worked for media outlets such as El Mundo, El País, Muy Interesante, and El Confidencial, and has coordinated digital platforms focused on psychiatry and sexuality. Her work has been recognized with numerous awards in medical and pharmaceutical journalism. She currently directs the Cúidate+ section of 65YMÁS, focusing on longevity and healthy habits.



Pablo Pérez

Scientific Director at the Maimónides Institute for Biomedical Research of Córdoba (IMIBIC)

He leads research projects on how lifestyle, particularly the Mediterranean diet, influences the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases such as diabetes. Awarded the Research Award Jesús Serra in 2018, he also promotes science communication and healthy habits, contributing to improved quality of life and public health policies.



Teresa Arnandis

Science communicator and social media educator ([@Ladyscienceofficial](https://www.instagram.com/Ladyscienceofficial))

PhD in Biochemistry and Biomedicine and university professor, Arnandis combines her academic work with science communication on social media under the alias @LadyScience. Her content brings science closer to the general public with rigor and clarity, combating misinformation and explaining biological phenomena in an accessible way. She is also an author and speaker, recognized for her outreach impact on digital platforms.

Find more information
[on our website](#)

