
**HHMI, Bill & Melinda Gates, Wellcome Trust and Gulbenkian select 41
International Research Scholars**

Scientist from Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência is one of the selected

The [Howard Hughes Medical Institute](#) (HHMI), the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the [Wellcome Trust](#) and the [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#) announced the selection of 41 exceptional early-career scientists as International Research Scholars. Each researcher will receive \$650,000 over five years, including Ana Domingos, group leader of the Obesity laboratory at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (IGC).

In 2016, these four Philanthropies have teamed up to develop scientific talent around the world in the biomedical research field. Nearly \$26.7 million were made available to support early-career scientists with creative research programmes of outstanding quality. More than 1400 scientists across the globe applied to this programme, but only 41 researchers from 16 countries were selected. The selection process was conducted by a panel of distinguished international scientists that evaluated the impact of past work and the potential of the proposed research plan. Each foundation chose which scientists would like to support from that shortlist.

“This is an outstanding group of scientists who will push biomedical research forward worldwide, and we are thrilled to support them alongside our philanthropic partners,” said David Clapham, HHMI’s Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer.

Ana Domingos, IGC scientist, is one of the selected as *HHMI-Wellcome International Research Scholar*. Recently, Ana Domingos discovered a direct link between fat tissue and neurons of the sympathetic nervous system, which plays a role in burning fat. Stimulating these neurons could one day lead to a new treatment to cause fat loss. This funding will allow her to keep on investigating new molecular strategies to fight obesity. “It is a true privilege and an honor to be awarded by these Foundations”, says Ana Domingos. This is not the first time that international organizations award the IGC scientist, who has been recipient of the Human Frontiers Science Programme and the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO).

In Portugal, two other researchers were selected as *International Research Scholars*: Joe Paton, from the Champalimaud Foundation, and Catarina Homem, from CEDOC – Chronic Diseases Research Centre.

Jonathan Howard, IGC Director, says: “It is extraordinary how scientists in Portugal perform so well in highly competitive international calls, as this programme was. Three out of forty-one International Research Scholars is an excellent number. This is another indicator of how Portugal has scientists doing research at the highest international level.”

Chilean scientists Carlos Blondel, from Universidad Autonoma do Chile, was the Gulbenkian Foundation choice as HHMI-Gulbenkian International Research Scholar. Carlos Blondel is investigating interactions between microorganisms and humans,

and its impact in the emergence of infectious disease by studying pathogens' molecular weaponry.

The final count of International Research Scholars awarded to each country shows 7 for China, 6 for Australia and Israel, 3 for Chile, Portugal, Singapore and Switzerland, 2 for Spain, and 1 for Austria, Cambodia, Hungary, India, South Korea, The Netherlands, South Africa and Tanzania. This programme is open to scientists across the globe with the exception of G7 countries.

More information:

International Research Scholars – the complete list of the 2017 awardees can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/mayc0jctjp19lks/International%20Research%20Scholar%20Summaries.docx?dl=0>

Ana Domingos is group leader of the Obesity laboratory at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência since 2013. Before her PhD in neurobiology with Leslie Vosshal at the Rockefeller, Dr Ana Domingos studied mathematics at the University of Lisbon. At Rockefeller, she started her Obesity research career in 2006 as a postdoctoral associate of Jeffrey Friedman, who discovered the hormone Leptin. As a postdoc, Dr Ana Domingos used optogenetic tools to identify a neuronal circuit in the brain mediating the reward value of sugar. She discovered that Leptin has a regulatory effect on this circuit, influencing how much one likes sugar. In the fall of 2013, she started the Obesity lab, at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência, in her home country Portugal. Domingos' lab was the first to visualize the long-time conjectured peripheral neuron-adipose junctions in the adipose tissue. Furthermore, her lab demonstrated that localized activation of these peripheral neurons is sufficient for lipolysis and fat mass reduction. Thus direct and targeted pharmacologic activation of sympathetic inputs to adipose tissues could represent a novel strategy for the induction of fat loss and a new anti-obesity therapy that would circumvent the challenges of drug delivery to the brain. These findings were published in Cell, and were widely disseminated in Nature, Science as well as Cell Press. Dr Ana Domingos received international awards such as those given by The Human Frontiers Science Program and the European Molecular Biology Organization.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute plays a powerful role in advancing scientific research and education. Its scientists, located across the country and around the world, have made important discoveries that advance both human health and our fundamental understanding of biology. The Institute also aims to transform science education into a creative, interdisciplinary endeavor that reflects the excitement of real research. HHMI is headquartered in Chevy Chase, Maryland. www.hhmi.org

International programmes:

<http://www.hhmi.org/programs/biomedical-research/international-programs>

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation -Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people – especially those with the fewest resources – have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life.

Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. www.gatesfoundation.org/

The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. We support bright minds in science, the humanities and the social sciences, as well as education, public engagement and the application of research to medicine. Our investment portfolio gives us the independence to support such transformative work as the sequencing and understanding of the human genome, research that established front-line drugs for malaria, and Wellcome Collection, our free venue for the incurably curious that explores medicine, life and art. www.wellcome.ac.uk

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is an international foundation that bears the name of businessman, art collector and philanthropist of Armenian origin, Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1869-1955). For almost 60 years, the Foundation has been carrying out extensive activities both in Portugal and abroad through the development of in-house projects - or in partnership with other institutions - and by awarding scholarships and grants. Headquartered in Lisbon, where Calouste Gulbenkian spent his last years, the Foundation is also home to a scientific investigation centre in Oeiras, and runs delegations in Paris and London - cities where Calouste Gulbenkian lived. www.gulbenkian.pt/inst/en/Homepage



Caption: Ana Domingos was selected as International Research Scholar. Credit: Sandra Ribeiro, IGC.

