

Press release

## The Daniel Bravo Andreu Private Foundation awards grants for short stays abroad to researchers from Hospital Clínic, the Sant Pau Research Institute and IDIBAPS

**Paloma Jordà, Jesús Álvarez-García and Joaquim Bobi will conduct high-impact biomedical research projects in Canada, the United States and the Netherlands**

*Sant Just Desvern (Barcelona), 20 May 2019* - The Daniel Bravo Andreu Private Foundation has awarded three grants for short stays abroad in 2019 to the doctoral student **Paloma Jordà** of the Hospital Clínic-University of Barcelona, **Dr Jesús Álvarez-García** of the Sant Pau Research Institute, and the doctoral student **Joaquim Bobi** of the August Pi i Sunyer Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBAPS)-University of Barcelona.

Since the grants were created in 2013, the objective of the Daniel Bravo Grants has been to stimulate high-impact academic, clinical and social biomedical research in Catalonia, principally in the field of cardiovascular imaging and non-invasive diagnostic techniques. Each grant provides a 3,000 Euro per month allowance plus travel costs for three to nine month stays in prestigious international centres.

### Reducing the risk of arrhythmias and sudden deaths

**Paloma Jordà** joined the Cardiology Department of the Hospital Clínic in 2017 providing clinical care to patients with hereditary arrhythmic diseases and myocardial (heart muscle) diseases. She also participates in several research projects led by **Dr Elena Arbelo and Dr Ana García**. "My goal is to become a cardiologist who specialises in hereditary heart diseases" she explains. The focus of her doctoral thesis is the **genetic, clinical and radiological characterisation of arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy**.

People with cardiomyopathy have a higher risk of arrhythmia and sudden death. In order to identify variables that can stratify this risk, Jordà will have a research stay in the Montreal Heart Institute (Canada) with **Dr Rafik Tadros and Dr Mario Talajic**.

"Hereditary heart diseases are usually classified as rare due to their low prevalence, but they can affect the young people and have a high lethal potential if they are not identified and treated correctly at the right time" explains **Dr Elena Arbelo**. Hospital Clínic has extensive experience in this field since it was encouraged by Professor Josep Brugada and provides care to more than one thousand patients each year with these diseases.

### **New approaches to heart failure**

For his part, the cardiologist **Jesús Álvarez-García**, a doctor of Medicine from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and a researcher in the Sant Pau Research Institute since 2007, has been awarded a grant to join the Heart Failure and Transplant Unit of the Mount Sinai Heart Hospital in New York (United States) directed by **Dr Valentí Fuster**.

With the first heart transplant in Catalonia, Sant Pau Hospital started a programme that has helped establish a Heart Failure Unit that has performed transplants on more than 600 patients. The appearance of new ventricular assist devices (VAD) and their use in complex patients, whether or not they are awaiting a transplant, requires training and specialisation that only a major reference centre like Mount Sinai Heart Hospital can provide, as Dr Álvarez-García comments.

The specific purpose of the stay in the United States will be to determine the impact that different indicators and therapies may have in the prognosis of **patients who have a VAD implanted**, establishing a long-term line of research and academic collaboration.

"The Daniel Bravo Grant is a great opportunity for medical researchers to investigate emerging care needs and implement new lines of research in our department in Barcelona" remarks his mentor, professor **Joan Cinca**.

### **Understanding cardiac thromboses**

The third grant was awarded to **Joaquim Bobi**, a doctoral student of the University of Barcelona who has been researching in the atherosclerosis, coronary diseases and heart failure group of the IDIBAPS since 2016.

Mr Bobi has chosen to join the Thoraxcenter group of the Erasmus University Medical Center in Rotterdam (Netherlands) led by **Dr Heleen van Beusekom** to carry out the project entitled *Coronary thrombosis and vascular healing phenotype: thrombus characterization by molecular, histological and high-resolution intravascular imaging techniques*.

"Thoraxcenter is one of the pioneering centres in cardiovascular research, specifically, in interventional cardiology, and it features multidisciplinary and innovative teams" noted his mentor, **Dr Manel Sabaté**.

Advances in recent decades in managing **acute coronary syndromes** (ACS) have led to a direct impact on improving death rates. However, the information concerning the biological aspects of lesions and thrombi obtained with coronary image techniques are limited.

"We have to **characterise the phenotype of thromboses and lesions better** to better understand how they contribute to serious ACS and to be able to develop more accurate treatments" comments Joaquim Bobi. Thoraxcenter has a biobank of thrombi and coronary coagulants and a database of coronary images. "This offers us an exceptional opportunity to compare the molecular and histological characteristics in terms of vascular care with the characteristics of coronary images and the patient's progress." The data obtained from the study backed by the **Daniel Bravo Andreu Private Foundation** can help the scientific community to optimise treatment after heart surgery.

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**More information:**

Daniel Bravo Andreu Private Foundation  
Communications Department (Gemma Escarré)  
M. 667 76 15 24  
[info@gemmaescarre.com](mailto:info@gemmaescarre.com)  
[www.fundaciodanielbravo.org](http://www.fundaciodanielbravo.org)