PRBB-CRG CONFERENCES

Conference Programme financed by the CRG and the PRBB

Anna Tramontano, Friday April 15. Tramontano, from Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, focuses on the computational analysis of biological data, the development and improvement of methods for the analysis of genomes and proteomes and the applications of methods to problems of biomedical interest. She is involved in many worldwide initiatives aimed at analyzing post-genomic biological data in order to improve our understanding of life at a molecular level. She has been invited by Stephan Ossowski (CRG).

George Débrégeas, Monday April 18. Débrégeas, from Laboratoire Jean Perrin in Paris, France, is interested in zebrafish behaviour and calcium imaging. He aims at developing experimental tools to address the production of complex (natural-like) sensory environments, and *neural recordings*, where the main challenge is to obtain long-term measurements of the activity of a significant fraction of the neurons with single-cell resolution on intact animals. He has been invited by Cristina Pujades (UPF).

Emma Grainger, Monday April 25. Grainger, from London, United Kingdom, has been an editor at *The Lancet Oncology* since 2005, starting as a Senior Editor and then as Deputy Editor from 2008, and is founding Editor of *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*. She has been invited by Esther Barreiro (IMIM).

Miguel Mulet, Friday April 29. Mulet, Director of Strategy and New Projects of TiGenix. His primary role at TiGenix is focused on aligning the functions that drive the cell therapy pipeline in Crohn's Disease and Acute Myocardial Infarct. In addition, and besides business development activities to broaden the current pipeline, he is in charge of advancing the market readiness of the current platforms through implementation of new technologies and process improvement initiatives. He has been invited by Pablo Cironi (TBDO - CRG).

Rita Casadio, Thursday May 5. Casadio, from the University of Bologna, Italy, is interested in computer modeling of relevant biological processes, such as protein folding, protein-protein interaction, genome annotation, protein interaction networks, and SNPs search and annotation and their effect on protein stability. She develops specific software for problem solving of large scale analysis of biomedical and biotechnological data out of genome sequencing or experiments on proteomes and interactomes. She has been invited by Roderic Guigó (CRG).

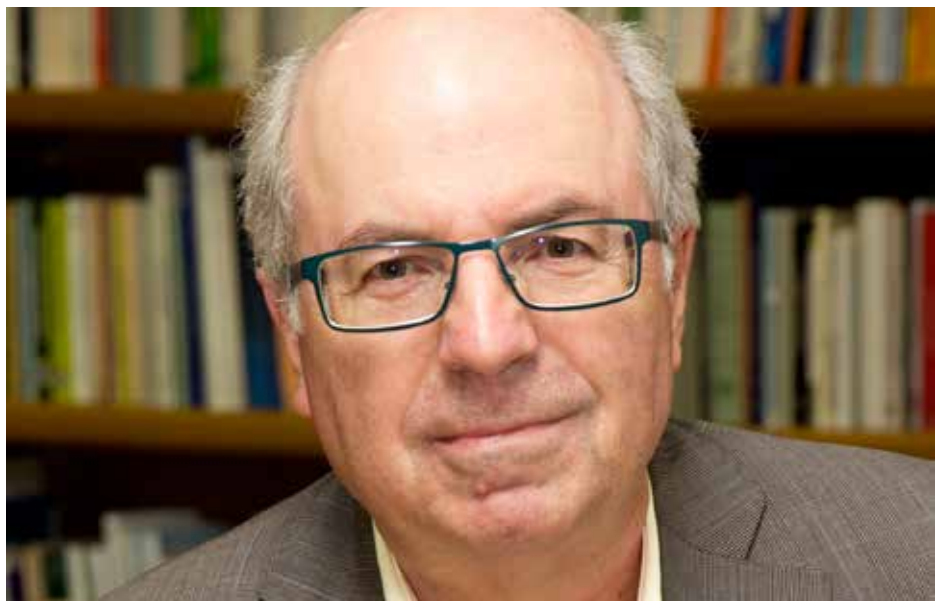
Lena Gunhaga, Monday May 9. Gunhaga, from the Umeå Centre for Molecular Medicine in Sweden, is interested in the development of the peripheral nervous system (PNS), in particular, the signaling molecules involved in early specification and patterning of the olfactory epithelium Her research also aims to understand how progenitor cells differentiate into neurons within the olfactory epithelium, and how an epithelial-mesenchimal transition-like process (EMT) allows specific neurons to leave the olfactory epithelium. She has been invited by Fernando Giráldez (UPF).

ENTREVISTA CIENTÍFICA / SCIENTIFIC INTERVIEW

JORDI CAMÍ – DIRECTOR DEL PRBB

«Creant i desplegant estructures de recerca»

Maruxa Martínez-Campos



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D'on va sorgir la idea de crear el PRBB?

De l'oportunitat d'afegir recerca bàsica i translacional al costat d'un hospital. El primer projecte el vaig redactar l'any 1985, quan dirigia l'IMIM. La idea va progressar gràcies al suport de Joan Clos, aleshores regidor de l'Ajuntament. Però van haver de passar molts anys fins que no es va fer realitat. Una fita fou el 1991, any en què es va modificar el pla urbanístic per especialitzar l'ús de la parcel·la actual per a un parc biomèdic. Però les obres no començarien fins a 10 anys després (2001), desencallades pels acords de l'Ajuntament amb la UPF arran de la creació dels estudis de biomedicina (1997).

Algun secret?

El fet d'estar envoltat de gent molt millor que tu, com en Miguel Beato, que ens assessorava en el projecte universitari i que, l'any 2000, es va posar al capdavant del CRG i va aconseguir fer un dels millors centres del món. Avui el PRBB és una concentració inusual de talent en un espai immillorable. I les oportunitats continuen; ben aviat acollirem una nova *outstation* de l'EMBL.

Deu anys després, com s'assembla la idea inicial a la final?

La concepció inicial era més integrada, amb plataformes i recursos administratius compartits. Però era un tipus de cultura difícil d'implantar en èpoques de vaques grasses. Avui l'organització global està més distribuïda, però hem aconseguit funcionar harmònicament i amb molt pragmatisme.

Quines coses són diferents de com te les havies imaginat?

Per exemple, quan es dissenyava el Parc ningú no preveia que en pocs anys acumularíem *petabytes* d'informació i que existiria el núvol. El *data centre* actual es considerava exageradament gran, però avui ha quedat superat per les noves necessitats de càlcul i emmagatzematge de la recerca biomèdica. Tampoc no es preveien missions tan necessàries i exitoses com la divulgació que fan tots els centres i el mateix PRBB, sobretot les activitats dirigides a estudiants o la jornada de portes obertes, les quals atrauen anualment més de 12.000 persones.

Què més valores positivament?

La concepció del PRBB es va anticipar als temps. Avui ningú no discuteix la idea de crear estructures per fomentar la recerca translacional. Encara més important: si els centres del PRBB han pogut atraure el millor talent del món, és per la massa crítica aconseguida i per les seves instal·lacions (que cal seguir modernitzant!). També valoro haver estat pioners a promoure les bones pràctiques científiques i la molt ben considerada oferta de formació del programa Intervals.

Què ha significat per a tu crear el PRBB?

El PRBB ha estat una de les aventures més difícils i més fascinants de la meva vida professional. Primer fou la reinvenció de l'IMIM, i després la creació dels estudis de ciències de la salut i de la vida a la UPF. Sembla que m'hagi especialitzat a crear i desplegar estructures de recerca. Ara impulso la Fundació Pasqual Maragall per a la recerca en l'Alzheimer, un centre de recerca nascut en plena crisi econòmica, sense recursos públics estructurals; tot un nou repte.

On veus el PRBB d'aquí a 10 anys?

Amb una reputació igual o millor que l'actual i amb el desig que s'adapti a les transformacions tecnològiques que vénen. El fracàs seria que tot seguís igual. Potser no hi haurà els mateixos centres, o la mateixa distribució, però continuarà essent un marc internacional per fer-hi recerca d'excel·lència.

"Creating and building research capacities"

Where did the idea of creating the PRBB come from?

From the opportunity of bringing basic and translational research together next to a hospital. I wrote the first project in 1985, when I was directing the IMIM. The idea progressed thanks to the support of Joan Clos, then city councillor. But it took many years until it became a reality. We reached a milestone in 1991 when the urban plan was amended to use the current site for a specialised biomedical park. But work did not begin on it until ten years later (2001), when the idea was refloated thanks to Council agreements with the UPF resulting from the setting up of the biomedical studies (1997).

The secret of success?

Being surrounded by your betters, people like Miguel Beato, who was an advisor for the university project and who in 2000 took the helm of the CRG, helping it become one of the top centres in the world. Today the PRBB is an unusual concentration of talent in a superb space. And the opportunities continue to come; soon we will welcome a new EMBL outstation.

Ten years later, how similar is reality to the original idea?

The original design was more integrated, with shared platforms and common administrative resources. But that kind of culture was difficult to implement in the good times. Today's global organisation is more distributed, but we have managed to work harmoniously and with great pragmatism.

Which things are different from how you had imagined them?

When designing the Park nobody expected that a few years later we would have accumulated petabytes of information and that the cloud would exist. The current data centre was considered too big at the time, but now it has been dwarfed by the new calculation and storage space requirements for biomedical research. On the other hand, current initiatives that are both necessary and successful were not anticipated, such as the outreach activities all the centres and the PRBB are involved in: especially those aimed at students and the Open Day, activities that attract more than 12,000 people annually.

What else do you value positively?

The idea of the PRBB was ahead of its time. Today no one doubts that creating structures for promoting translational research is a good idea. Even more importantly, if the PRBB centres have been able to attract the best talent in the world, it is thanks to the critical mass and facilities (which we must keep on modernising!). For me, being pioneers in promoting good scientific practice has been very valuable, just like our highly-regarded Intervals training programme.

What has creating the PRBB meant for you, personally?

The PRBB has been one of the toughest and most fascinating adventures of my professional life. First came the reinvention of the IMIM, later the creation of the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at the UPF. I seem to have specialised in creating and building research structures! Now I lead the Pasqual Maragall Foundation for research into Alzheimer's disease, a research centre set up during the economic crisis with no structural public resources, a huge challenge.

Where do you see the PRBB in 10 years?

With a reputation equal to or better than it is today, and the desire to adapt to future technological changes. Staying the same would be a failure. Maybe the centres will be different, and the distribution may alter, but it will remain an international framework for excellent research ■