

## **María S. Soengas honoured by the *Xunta de Galicia* with the *María Josefa Wonenburger Award***

**Madrid, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009.** **María S. Soengas**, Head of the Melanoma Group at the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO) has been awarded the Maria Wonenburger Prize by the *Secretaría Xeral da Igualdade* of *La Xunta de Galicia*.

This prize recognizes the scientific achievements and social impact of women in the fields of science and technology, and honours the Galician mathematician María Josefa Wonenburger Planells. Dr. Wonenburger was a pioneer in the study of algebraic structures during her tenure at the Universities of Yale, Toronto and Indiana. Alumni from her group have developed a variety of mathematical tools with important implications in physics. In this spirit, the *Xunta de Galicia* acknowledges the work of women of international standing who dedicate important efforts to training and education.

María Soengas is an expert in molecular mechanisms of cancer initiation and progression. Research in her group focuses on malignant melanoma, which is a paradigm of chemoresistant cancers with an extremely poor prognosis. In close collaboration with various clinical institutions, the Soengas team has identified key genetic and epigenetic defects involving programmes of apoptosis, senescence and autophagy defining the aggressive behaviour of melanoma cells. These results have served as the platform for molecularly targeted therapies that are being evaluated for further preclinical development. The ultimate objective of the CNIO's Melanoma Group is to translate basic research into a more rational approach to melanoma diagnosis and treatment.

The award ceremony will take place at the *Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea* in Santiago de Compostela on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Alberto Núñez Feijoo (President of *La Xunta de Galicia*), Javier Guerra Fernández (*Conselleiro de Economía e Industria*), Jesús Vázquez Abad (*Conselleiro de Educación*), and representatives of the main Galician institutions for culture, science and politics, will participate in this event. Soengas acceptance speech will be entitled "*En Equipo y con Tesón: Reflexiones sobre la Investigación y el Tratamiento del Melanoma*".