

Genomic Instability Group honoured by the “Pfizer Foundation Award”

Madrid, October 22nd 2009 – A publication published by Luis Ignacio Toledo on work done during his PhD under the supervision of Oscar Fernández-Capetillo in the Genomic Instability Group at the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO) has won the “Pfizer Foundation Award” in the category "Basic Research". The Pfizer Foundation has been promoting these prizes for over a decade now, the objective being to promote scientific research and in particular those works that can be translated into practical applications for socially relevant diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, respiratory and infectious diseases and cancer.

The paper was published in the prestigious journal *Genes and Development* (Toledo L *et al. Genes Dev* 2008) and describes findings on developing a molecular system that can halt the proliferation of cancer cells. Through the exploitation of the intrinsic activity of the ATR protein, which normally delays cellular division when DNA damage is present, Oscar Fernández-Capetillo’s Group has designed a new molecular trick to deceive the protein and to stimulate its activity even in the absence of DNA damage.

These findings suggest that stimulating the intrinsic activity of ATR can irreversibly stop the division of cancer cells. Given that the majority of current drugs used in chemotherapy have been designed to damage DNA (and thus often leading to severe side effects) it is important that this new approach could lead to the development of non-genotoxic cancer therapies.

Several members from the Genomic Instability Group participated in this research, being mainly the product of the thesis research of Luis Ignacio Toledo. The group now works on trying to exploit this system to develop new compounds with anti-tumour activity.

The prize consists of 30,000 Euros that will be used to fund the research activities of the group. Luis Ignacio Toledo will receive the prize during a ceremony that will take place in the "Canal" Theatre in Madrid on 29th October 2009.