

## **ÓSCAR FERNÁNDEZ-CAPETILLO, 'CARMEN Y SEVERO OCHOA' RESEARCH AWARD IN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY 2015**

- **This award acknowledges the pioneering work of the CNIO researcher in the study of the relationship between DNA damage and cancer, and the generation of molecules, currently under development, as potential anticancer drugs**
- **The award presentation ceremony will take place on November 24 at the CSIC Students' Residence, in Madrid**

**Madrid (Spain), November 11, 2015.** The Judging panel of the *Carmen y Severo Ochoa* Research Award in Molecular Biology has unanimously granted this prestigious prize to the biochemist, Óscar Fernández-Capetillo, Head of the Genomic Instability Group at the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO). The award acknowledges the researcher's outstanding discoveries in the field of replicative stress, i.e. the damage to the DNA generated in cells during their replication, a phenomenon inherent to life that is closely related to key cancer and ageing processes. The award will be presented on November 24, at the presentation ceremony taking place at the CSIC Students' Residence, in Madrid

The judging panel highlights the importance of the research work carried out by Fernández-Capetillo's group in creating experimental tools that induce tumour cell death by increasing replicative stress. Their studies have uncovered that reduced levels of the ATR protein kinase — which is essential for the DNA damage response and for cell viability — are particularly toxic to tumours, due to the high levels of replicative stress that accumulate in the cells. This finding, has led to the development, in collaboration with the CNIO Experimental Therapeutics Programme, of

selective ATR inhibitor molecules with excellent pharmacological potential. In December 2013, these molecules were licensed to the pharmaceutical company, Merck Serono, representing a milestone for biomedical research in Spain carried out by a public Spanish Research Centre.

In the words of the researcher: “Winning this award is very special for me because it represents the acknowledgement of my closest peers, with whom I identify and who have been reference points in my own research. Somehow, I think that there is a connection between Severo Ochoa and our work through generations of scientists who trained under him, and I am very happy and proud to receive this recognition that bears his name and that of his wife, Carmen.”

Fernández-Capetillo's research career, which includes publications in very prestigious scientific journals, has earned him national and international scientific recognition. He has obtained funding from the most prestigious international entities, such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in the US, or the European Research Council (ERC), which has awarded him two consecutive projects. Among the awards he has received, we can mention the election to EMBO Young Investigator in 2008, and the Eppendorf Award for Young European Investigators in 2009, an award granted by the biotechnology company *Eppendorf* and *Nature* magazine to the best European investigators in biomedicine under 35 years of age. In 2014, the journal, *Cell*, included him in the list of the 40 most prominent scientists in the world under 40 years of age for the creative way in which he addresses cancer research.

The Jury Panel of the Prize was made up of members of the Board of Trustees of the *Fundación Carmen y Severo Ochoa*: César Nombela (Chairperson), Santiago Grisolia, Margarita Salas, Julio Rodríguez Villanueva, Carlos López Otín and César de Haro. This award, which is holding its 21st edition in 2015, was instituted by Severo Ochoa in his will and is granted, each year, to a Spanish molecular biologist for work performed in Spain over the past five years.



Oscar Fernández-Capetillo in his office at the CNIO. /CNIO

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