

[European College of Neuropsychopharmacology](#) (ECNP)

23 March 2015

Francesc Artigas's exceptional research contributions to depression and schizophrenia recognised by the 2015 ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award

The European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) is pleased to announce Francesc Artigas as the recipient of the 2015 ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award in recognition of his pioneering work in the field of systems neuropharmacology. The ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award is presented annually and recognises distinguished research in neuropsychopharmacology and closely related disciplines.

Chair of the Department of Neurochemistry and Neuropharmacology at the Instituto de Investigaciones Biomédicas de Barcelona of the Spanish Research Council (CSIC), Francesc Artigas has been a leader in exploring the mode of action of antidepressant and antipsychotic drugs through the neurotransmitters, receptors, cellular elements and brain circuits sensitive to the action of these drugs.

His more recent work has critically advanced our understanding of the functional relationships between the prefrontal cortex, a key area in psychiatric diseases, and the midbrain monoamine systems (5-HT and DA). He pioneered the use of *in vivo* neurochemical techniques to examine the mechanism of action of antidepressant drugs blocking the serotonin (5-HT) transporter, such as the SSRI and tricyclic antidepressants (TCA), and to characterise the critical role of the prefrontal cortex in the control of ascending midbrain monoamine systems. His work has produced fundamental insights into how antidepressant drugs interact with physiological mechanisms and have fostered the development of new multimodal antidepressant drugs.

Additional research into the role of thalamo-cortical circuits in the psychotomimetic action of non-competitive NMDA-R antagonists and serotonergic hallucinogens has resulted in a model that may be relevant for the functional identification of new antipsychotic targets.

In his work on novel antidepressant strategies – including ketamine, deep brain stimulation and new molecular approaches such as the use of RNA interference strategies with small interference RNA – he and his group are also pioneering the development of conjugated siRNA molecules in order to act selectively on genes expressed by selected neuronal populations. This approach may solve one of the most important problems in the use of siRNA strategies in brain: the delivery to specific neuronal types or regions.

In announcing the award, ECNP Award Committee chair Andreas Meyer-Lindenberg, Germany, said, "Francesc Artigas has been an exceptionally productive and innovative researcher in applied neuroscience, advancing our understanding of brain function in critical ways on an impressive number of fronts. The translational implications of his work for the treatment of serious diseases, including major depression and schizophrenia, make him an especially suitable winner. We are very pleased to be able to offer him this award."

Francesc Artigas will receive the award during the 28th ECNP Congress on 29 August-1 September 2015 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where he will deliver the ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award plenary lecture.

The ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award is granted each year, alternating between basic science and clinical research. The award is accompanied by a prize of €20,000, which the winner may share with

junior collaborators. Francesc Artigas has nominated Drs. Pau Celada and Analía Bortolozzi of the Institut d'Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer (IDIBAPS) in Barcelona as joint recipients.

###

Francesc Artigas's ECNP Expert Talk on "Prefrontal cortex-based circuits: relevance for antidepressant and antipsychotic drug action" is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qojo6NphnI4>.

ECNP is an independent scientific association whose mission is to advance the science of the brain, promote better treatment and enhance brain health. The annual ECNP Congress attracts scientists and clinicians from across the world to discuss the latest advances in brain research in Europe's largest meeting on brain science. More information about ECNP, its aims and activities, can be found at www.ecnp.eu

More information on the ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award can be found at: <http://www.ecnp.eu/awards/ECNP-neuropsychopharmacology-award.aspx>.

Contact:

Tom Parkhill
ECNP Press Officer
Tel. +39 349 238 8191 (mobile)
E-mail: tom@parkhill.it