



16th of February 2006

**Fondazione Parco Biomedico San Raffaele to participate in a Europe wide project on developing new approaches to prevent and treat congestive heart failure**

Fondazione Parco Biomedico San Raffaele to participate in a Europe wide project on developing new approaches to prevent and treat congestive heart failure through analysis of the genomics of signalling. The EUGeneHeart project is a 14 million€, 5 year project with 21 partners from 10 different European countries working in both academia and industry. The goal of this project to develop new strategies to prevent and treat heart failure by understanding the genetic basis of signalling subsequent to increased myocardial load in hypertrophy and heart failure.

Dr. Gianluigi Condorelli, a La Sapienza professor also having a research group on the site of the Fondazione, is among the three European partners of the steering committee, coordinated by Professor Gerd Hasenfuss, of the University of Gottingen. His team will focus on the study of new molecular tools for improving the contractile properties of cardiac cells, which are altered in heart failure.

For the Foundation this represents a real step forward in reaching the highest echelons of international research and raising the global awareness of the quality of science and infrastructure that is in the Lazio region. This result reinforces the Foundations' partners (Banca di Roma, Camera di Commercio di Roma e Fondazione San Raffaele Monte Tabor) commitment in supporting research in the field of medicine in the hope of obtaining fundamental information for future therapeutic development for mankind.

**Information on congestive heart failure**

A leading cause of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality and is the main cause of hospitalization among patients older than 65 years in Europe. The prevalence of heart failure in patients visiting a general practice for any reason is 6% in patients above 50 years of age and 12% in these above 80 years of age. Due to the aging of industrialised populations, by the year 2020 the annual number of hospital admissions due to heart failure is predicted to increase by 17%. As a clinical syndrome, heart failure represents the end-point of many diseases. Coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and valvular lesions, are major causes for heart failure in older patients. However, even young patients and children may suffer from heart failure as a result of viral infections and cardiomyopathies and it remains unknown whether women are more susceptible to heart failure than men. With an age-dependently increasing prevalence (~5% at the age of 70), heart failure is one of the most common disabling diseases in Europe, and therefore carries a tremendous socio-economical relevance. Even though the past 10 years have seen a substantial improvement in the drug-based therapy of heart failure, the 5-year mortality of patients hospitalised for severe heart failure (NYHA II-IV) remains higher than 60% and the number of disability life years resulting in a major adverse impact of life and European health economics are enormous.

**Fondazione Parco Biomedico San Raffaele**

Located approximately 15 km south of Rome in a natural reserve, the science park was created by the Banca di Roma, the Chamber of Commerce of Rome, and the Fondazione San Raffaele Monte Tabor in response to the recognised need to have a biomedical research centre in the Lazio region. Opened in 2002, the park is now home to 2 companies and 9 research groups from Universities and centres working in: Oncology, leukaemia and Immunology; Molecular cardiology; Skeletal regeneration; Cell therapy and tissue engineering; Muscular dystrophies; Biomedical quality control; Neurological Disorders; Stem cells; and Diabetes.

---