Innovative research brings hope under the European banner with the Fondation ARC for Cancer Research:

Europe’s leading cancer researchers celebrated at the European Parliament with the award of exceptional prizes totalling €450,000

This coming 12 June, the Fondation ARC will once again honour exceptional cancer researchers with two prestigious awards, the 51st Fondation ARC Léopold Griffuel Prize and the 1st Fondation ARC Oberling–Haguenau Grand Prize. This special edition will reward researchers who have made major advances in breast cancer research, addressing the disease’s biological and genetic aspects as well as its social impact with the issue of returning to work after cancer.

“By awarding these prizes, which demonstrate France’s generosity, the Fondation ARC is obviously aiming to recognize exceptional researchers whose discoveries have made a significant contribution to the history of cancer research,” says Dominique Bazy, President of the Fondation ARC. “Through these substantial grants, the Foundation intends to give the winning researchers the resources to pursue a promising line of research and accelerate a research programme”.

When the laureates of the Fondation ARC Léopold Griffuel Prize are uncovering new ways to better treat breast cancer…

The jury of the Fondation ARC Léopold Griffuel Prize, chaired by Professor Hugues de Thé from Collège de France and made up of international specialists, celebrates the advances of two exceptional researchers who, as Prof. de Thé indicates, “have the creativity and ability to explore new avenues by thinking outside the box and the strong ambition to translate research outcomes into patient benefits”.

This year, the jury has decided to award Professor Sarah–Maria Fendt from the VIB-KU Leuven Center for Cancer Biology (Belgium) with the prize for basic research, and Professor Carlos Caldas from the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute (United Kingdom) with the prize for translational and clinical research. They will each receive €150,000 for themselves and their team.
Professor Sarah–Maria Fendt leads a laboratory that is developing an innovative approach by considering the formation of cancer metastases as a metabolic disease. She and her team are studying the metabolism of cancer cells that detach from the primary tumour to spread and form metastases. In particular, her work has shown how these cells use nutrients, for example, they found that fats are not only used for energy production in cancer but that metastasizing cancer cells use them to gain the ability to grow in distant organs. Sarah–Maria Fendt has also identified a potential biomarker that predicts metastases in triple-negative breast cancer.

Professor Carlos Caldas and his team have been working on genomics, circulating tumour DNA and molecular tissue imaging to make a major impact on the understanding and management of breast cancer. By conducting studies based on exhaustive DNA sequencing and other molecular-level analyses, this genomics pioneer has been able to classify the different disease subtypes. His classification is internationally recognized and now used by doctors to guide patient management and treatment choices. In the same vein, Professor Caldas has also developed a tumour xenograft library that is used for therapeutic screening and to study tumors as cellular ecosystems.

The jury of the Fondation ARC Oberling–Haguenau Grand Prize is chaired by Professor Jean–Yves Scoazec, President of the Fondation ARC’s Scientific Council, who reiterates its purpose: "rewarding structural research advances that pave the way for oncology expertise to prolong and improve patients' lives".

The laureate of the inaugural Fondation ARC Oberling–Haguenau Grand Prize, epidemiologist Dr Gwenn Menvielle, is rewarded for her work into the difficulties encountered by women returning to work after breast cancer.

Dr Gwenn Menvielle has studied the ‘double-penalty’ phenomenon that affects women who are in remission after breast cancer but unable to rejoin the labour market (21% do not return to work one year after stopping treatment). Dr Gwenn Menvielle’s research has identified women most at risk of not returning to work: these are women with symptoms of depression on concluding treatment, working physically demanding jobs, working shifts or not having two consecutive days off per week, or receiving chemotherapy combined with HER-2 targeting therapy. The family environment also has an impact: women with 3 or more dependent children return to work less, but only if they live in a household with a modest income (<2500€).
FOCUS ON Professor Sarah-Maria Fendt  
(VIB-KU Leuven Center for Cancer Biology, Belgium): leading the way in understanding metastasis formation

Professor Sarah-Maria Fendt is a German researcher and director of research at the Center for Cancer Biology of the Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie in Leuven, Belgium. She is also a lecturer in the Catholic University of Leuven’s Medical Oncology Department. Her team is pioneering study of the link between cancer cell metabolism and metastasis formation. Her work on understanding metabolism of the tumour environment, as well as dissecting the associated molecular mechanisms, is helping to identify new therapeutic avenues for preventing breast cancer progression. It is notable for its excellence and originality and has already been awarded a number of international prizes, including the EMBO Gold Medal.

With this Prize, the research team will receive an additional grant of 100,000 euros.

FOCUS ON Professor Carlos Caldas  
(Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute, United Kingdom): a pioneer in the molecular classification of breast cancers

Professor Carlos Caldas is a Portuguese-born clinical and translational researcher, professor of cancer medicine and head of the Breast Cancer Functional Genomics Laboratory at the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute. He was the creator of the Personalised Breast Cancer Programme, which routinely performs in them clinic DNA and RNA sequencing of blood and tumour samples from women diagnosed with breast cancer. Sequencing is a valuable tool for guiding patients towards the best treatment, but also for predicting whether the tumour will respond to treatment. Prof Caldas previously received the ESMO Hamilton Fairley Award (2016), the European Society of Human Genetics Award (2021), and the Susan G. Komen Brinker Award for Scientific Distinction in Basic Science (2021). With the Leopold Griffuel Prize, the Caldas research team will receive an additional grant of 100,000 euros.

FOCUS ON Dr Gwenn Menvielle  
(Inserm, Villejuif, France): the epidemiologist who looks at the difficulties facing women with breast cancer on returning to work

Dr Gwenn Menvielle has a PhD in public health and epidemiology and works at ERES-IPLESP, Paris. She coordinates the CANTO-WORK study, which aims to better understand the source of difficulties encountered by women with breast cancer when they return to work. The aim is then to propose ways to better support these patients.

The CANTO-WORK project was designed with Agnès Dumas, doctor of sociology (Gustave Roussy, Villejuif), and Inès Vaz-Luis, medical oncologist (Gustave Roussy, Villejuif). For the past three years, it has been supported by the Fondation ARC to the tune of 369,500 euros. With this Prize, the research team will receive an additional grant of 140,000 euros.
THE ARC FOUNDATION LEOPOLD GRIFFUEL PRIZE: Half a century of major research breakthroughs thanks to the property bequeathed by a generous couple of philanthropists

Created in 1970 and endowed with a total of €300,000, the Fondation ARC Léopold Griffuel Prize is Europe’s largest cancer research award. It owes its name to two philanthropists, Léopold and Alice Griffuel, who bequeathed both their two Parisian buildings to the Foundation, rents from which still help to fund the endowment.

Since its launch, the Fondation ARC Léopold Griffuel Prize has rewarded 62 researchers from ten or so countries. From oncogenic viruses to CAR-T cells, the prize-winners’ work has paved the way for major advances in cancer research and led to innovative treatments being made available to tens of thousands of patients around the world.

Fondation ARC Oberling–Haguenau Prize

Commemorating the work of Professor Charles Oberling and Doctor Françoise Haguenau, the Fondation Oberling–Haguenau was founded under the Fondation ARC umbrella in late 2019 to consolidate their long-term support for research. The founders’ aim was to actively promote cancer research, primarily by presenting a prestigious annual award to a researcher and team who have made major advances in understanding or treating cancer. Those circumstances led to the first Fondation ARC Oberling–Haguenau Grand Prize in 2022. The award, inspired by the previous Fondation ARC Team Prize, recognizes the leader of a delivered ‘Fondation ARC Accredited Programme’ that has led to a remarkable scientific production and enabled significant advances in the field of oncology. The new Grand Prize has a total endowment of 150,000 euros.

À PROPOS DE LA FONDATION ARC

Pour la Fondation ARC, tout part d’une conviction : la recherche vaincra le cancer. C’est grâce aux découvertes des chercheuses et des chercheurs que nous finirons par remporter la victoire.
Sa mission au quotidien est de libérer l’extraordinaire potentiel de la recherche française en cancérologie en lui apportant un soutien stratégique matériel et humain.