



Dear ICS members,

I am pleased to announce that Prof. Anna Maria Papini of the University of Florence, Italy, will receive the 2024 MCS-ICS (Medicinal Chemistry Section of the ICS) Award for Excellence in Medicinal Chemistry in Memory of Barry Cohen for her immense contributions to peptide science and chemical immunology.



Prof. Anna Maria Papini
annamaria.papini@unifi.it

Anna Maria Papini is a full professor of bioorganic chemistry at the Department of Chemistry "Ugo Schiff" of the University of Florence. She also holds the position of bioorganic chemistry chair of the CY Cergy Paris University in France. Papini received an international PhD in 1990 under the supervision of Professor Luis Moroder of the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry. After founding the first laboratory of peptide chemistry in 1991, she started in 2004 the Interdepartmental Research Unit of Peptide and Protein Chemistry and Biology (www.peptlab.unifi.it), associating the Departments of Chemistry and NeuroFarBa, Section of Pharmaceutical Sciences, of the University of Florence. Toward developing peptide antigens displaying post-translational modifications, Papini has advanced various peptide lipoylation, phosphorylation, glycosylation synthesis methods, and cross-linking strategies for constructing cyclic peptides for applications as antigens and ligands. She employed her methods for synthesizing oxytocin, melanocortin, and parathyroid hormone-related analogs.

In 2003, she cofounded the spin-off company EspiKem Srl, which managed the valorization of a peptide-based anti-aging cosmeceutical product, Definisse KP1, developed in her academic laboratories and launched on the global market on September 2023 by Relife, the aesthetic medicine division of Menarini group. Papini hypothesized that the progression of multiple sclerosis is linked to exogenous infectious agents expressing antigenic molecules, such as the pathogen Haemophilus influenza's hyperglucosylated adhesin. She mimicked those antigenic molecules with synthetic glycopeptides for diagnostic and therapeutic applications. In 2007, she cofounded the start-up Toscana Biomarkers Srl, which aims to diagnose autoimmune diseases. In 2016, Papini founded the Toscana EU-Region technology transfer Laboratory of Molecular Diagnostics and Life Sciences (MoD&LS), which incubated the University-Industry Joint Laboratory PeptFarm for GMP large-scale peptide synthesis. Laureate of the "Chaire d'Excellence" 2009-2014 of the French "Agence Nationale de la Recherche," she also started the French-Italian PeptLab in 2008.

Papini received the 2009 Frost & Sullivan Excellence in Research Award and the Vespucci Award for technology transfer of the Toscana Region. She received the 2008 Leonidas Zervas Award of the European Peptide Society, the first Dimitrios Theodoropoulos Memorial Award of the Hellenic Peptide Society, the 2019 Rita Levi Montalcini Award for Italian Israeli Cooperation for the project "Role of sugars in immune-mediated diseases" featuring a four-month stay at key laboratories of collaborators in Israel: Bar Ilan University, Weizmann Institute, and Hebrew University. She serves to promote student exchanges also through the Erasmus Program and launched the double M.Sc. degree with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The Barry Cohen international prize, which is awarded annually by the MCS-ICS, has been previously awarded nine times: <https://www.chemistry.org.il/prizes-page/?data=17>

The prize ceremony will occur during the 2024 MCS-ICS meeting on July 18th, 2024, at the Weizmann Institute.

Congratulations to Anna Maria for his achievements!

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