

The Hospital del Mar Research Institute, the Center for Genomic Regulation, and IrsiCaixa launch a project for healthy aging

- ***A joint project between the three research institutions has been selected for funding by the XPRIZE Foundation of the United States. It will receive \$250,000 to demonstrate that it is possible to extend human healthy lifespan.***
- ***The VITA project proposes combining two existing molecules and a multimodal lifestyle intervention to extend quality of life during aging.***
- ***The team formed by the three institutions now has one year to provide the first preliminary results and move on to a new stage of the awards, where the efficacy of the proposed new therapy will be assessed.***

Barcelona, May 27th, 2025. – A new research project jointly led by the Hospital del Mar Research Institute, the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG), and IrsiCaixa has been chosen as a **semi-finalist** in the **XPRIZE Healthspan** competition, organized by the XPRIZE Foundation of the United States. Only 40 projects were selected, four of which are European. There were more than 200 submitted initiatives in this round, each of them having to demonstrate their viability when making proposals to extend people's healthy life expectancy. This is the only research proposal from Spain to make it through the first phase of the competition.

The selected proposal is **VITA** (*Vitality through Integrative Therapeutics for Aging*), a collaborative initiative between the three institutions. Seeks a proactive and accessible approach that reduces the risk of age-related chronic diseases, improves human health, and extends quality of life into old age. The project proposes a new combination therapy involving **lamivudine**, a reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI) used in combination with other drugs as an antiviral treatment for HIV and alone to treat hepatitis B, and **epigallocatechin gallate** (EGCG), a molecule found in green tea that has been shown to improve cognition in various groups. At the same time, these drugs are paired with a multimodal lifestyle intervention targeting key aspects of healthy aging. ***"The goal is to rejuvenate muscular, immune, and cognitive functions by leveraging the complementary mechanisms of action of the two drugs,"*** explains Rafael de la Torre, principal investigator of the project and coordinator of the Integrated Pharmacology and Systems Neuroscience Group at the Hospital del Mar Research Institute.

"This is a major challenge in which the three institutions combine their expertise with the goal of improving quality of life in old age," says Bonaventura Clotet, director of IrsiCaixa. VITA will combine studies in animal models and clinical studies with the two molecules in patients with subjective cognitive decline or mild cognitive impairment. ***"VITA opens an innovative avenue to improve health in ageing through a combination of therapeutic and lifestyle strategies with preventative potential. It is an excellent example of how research can translate into concrete benefits for the quality of life of older adults,"*** notes Mara Dierssen, Group Leader of the Cellular and Systems Neurobiology Group at the Centre for Genomic Regulation.

First Phase of the Competition

After completing the first phase of the competition, the team leading the project has one year and a grant of \$250,000 to justify their proposed new therapy concept, as well as **generate preliminary data and present the design of a clinical trial** to evaluate its efficacy in

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larger populations. Based on the results, the project could be considered a finalist. In the case of VITA, these results must be submitted during the first quarter of 2026.

The final phase consists of a clinical trial that receives **a grant of \$1 million for each year the proposal is estimated to extend a person's life**. This figure is calculated using algorithms that predict the number of additional years of healthy life that the new therapy can provide.

The XPRIZE Healthspan competition seeks projects that improve health and quality of life, achieving healthy aging. The XPRIZE Foundation has the mission of inspiring and empowering humanity to achieve advances that accelerate an abundant and equitable future for everyone. It also promotes challenges to address climate change, develop technologies to combat forest fires, and develop quantum technologies, among others.

More information

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