



Exciting Opportunities and Events from the ESBRA Early-Career Investigators & Communication Committee in 2025

Elena Palma, ESBRA ECIC Committee Chair

As Chair of the ESBRA ECIC Committee, I am thrilled to share some of the engaging opportunities and activities our committee has planned for the upcoming year. Whether you are an early-career investigator seeking collaboration, exposure, or simply connection within the alcohol research community, 2025 promises to be an impactful year.

Call for New Members to Join the ECIC Committee

Are you an ECI passionate about advancing alcohol research? Do you enjoy webinars, symposia, and outreach activities? If so, we would love to have you on board! The ECIC Committee is now seeking motivated individuals to join our vibrant team. This is your chance to:

- Collaborate with like-minded researchers across Europe;
- Participate in organising impactful events and webinars;
- Contribute to science communication and outreach efforts;

Help shape the future of alcohol research.

The ECIC Committee, established in 2022, includes 14 enthusiastic members from 10 European countries. Our mission is to enhance engagement within the ESBRA community and foster collaboration to advance alcohol-related biomedical research. We are especially keen to hear from scientists or clinicians with a background in alcohol research who are committed to making a difference.

To apply, submit a brief motivation statement and a 2-page CV highlighting your research, communication, and outreach experience. The call is open until 17th January 2025, and successful applicants will start in February 2025. Join us to make a real impact on the field! For details, contact Dr Elena Palma at e.palma@researchinliver.org.uk and visit our webpage [ESBRA ECIC call-for-new-members](#).

Introducing an Innovative Webinar Format

Our committee is proud to launch a fresh approach to ESBRA webinars in 2025. Each session will feature a "double act" presentation format, where an experienced researcher introduces the topic alongside a student from their lab, who will present recent findings. This engaging setup fosters

mentorship and spotlights emerging talent.

Confirmed speakers for 2025 include:

- Dr. Jérôme Jeanblanc
- Dr. Antonio Riva
- Dr. Adelina Horhat
- Dr. Mohsan Subhani
- Dr. Olli Kärkkäinen.

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for updates on dates and topics. These webinars promise to inspire new ideas and collaborations.

20th ESBRA Congress in Brussels: September 4-6, 2025

The 20th ESBRA Congress will be held in Brussels, and the ECIC Committee has a dynamic lineup planned for early-career investigators. Highlights include:

- **ECI Symposium:** Showcasing groundbreaking research by emerging scientists;
- **Networking Event:** Facilitating meaningful connections among peers and senior researchers;
- **ECI Run for Alcohol Research:** Promoting community spirit and wellness while raising awareness.

This event will be a cornerstone for networking, learning, and celebrating progress in alcohol research. Don't miss it!

Get Involved

2025 is shaping up to be an exciting year for ECIs in alcohol research. Whether you join the ECIC Committee, participate in our webinars, or attend the ESBRA Congress, there is something for everyone. Let's work together to advance our shared mission and make a lasting impact in the field.

For more information or inquiries, feel free to contact me or the ECIC team. Together, we will make 2025 a transformative year for ESBRA and alcohol research!

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful festive season and a prosperous New Year filled with health, happiness, and success! •

ESBRA 2024 Wrap-Up: Key Events and Achievements

The **European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcohol (ESBRA)** made significant strides in 2024, advancing scientific research, fostering collaboration, and promoting public awareness in the field of alcohol research. Below is a summary of the key events and activities that defined the year for ESBRA.

1. Educational Webinars: Advancing Knowledge and Expertise. In 2024, ESBRA hosted a series of highly engaging and informative **webinars** designed to bring together researchers, clinicians, and students to explore cutting-edge topics in alcohol research. These online events offered a platform for experts to present the latest findings, discuss challenges, and share innovative solutions to complex issues related to alcohol use and its impacts.

- **1st Webinar – Alcohol Withdrawal in AUD: From Bench to Bed** Prof Philippe De Timary focused on the pathophysiology of alcohol withdrawal in individuals with **Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)**.

- **The series continued with a 2nd Webinar – Exploring Animal Models in Alcohol Research: From Addiction to Organ Damage** Delving into animal models, this session highlighted the critical role that preclinical studies play in understanding the physiological effects of alcohol addiction and its impact on various organs. Researchers presented recent findings using animal models to explore alcohol-related liver damage, neurological impairment, and addiction mechanisms (Drs Esi Domi, Sophie Leclercq, Anne-Marie Cassard).

- **The next Webinar discussed the Alternative Methods in Alcohol Research** With a focus on in vitro systems, computational models, and other non-animal techniques, the session emphasized the need for innovative, ethical approaches in alcohol research that can complement traditional methods while advancing scientific discovery (Drs Elena Palma, Simone Mayer, Ami Gloria Toulehohoun).

The 2024 Webinar's series were concluded with – Neuropsychological and Neuroimaging Investigations of Alcohol Use Disorder: From Bench to Bedside. Researchers shared insights into how these techniques are transforming our understanding of the brain's involvement in alcohol use and its relation to cognitive dysfunction, addiction behaviors, and treatment outcomes (Dr Anne-Lise Pitel).

These webinars provided a rich environment for knowledge exchange, ensuring that the latest scientific findings reached a wide audience and were accessible to professionals in the alcohol research field.

2. The Nordmann Award Meeting 2024. In addition to the webinars, **ESBRA's Nordmann Award Meeting** in 2024 was a highlight event, taking place on **October 22**. This prestigious meeting brought together leading researchers and clinicians to present and discuss the latest advancements in the field of alcohol use disorders (AUD) and its comorbidities.

Focus of the 2024 Nordmann Award Meeting The meeting highlighted the most recent **therapeutic advancements** in AUD treatment, with presentations on novel pharmacotherapies, intervention strategies, and emerging therapeutic targets. Additionally, the event addressed the complex interplay between **alcohol use disorders and other mental health conditions**, such as depression and anxiety, as well as the growing recognition of alcohol's role in **chronic diseases** such as liver disease and cardiovascular complications.

The meeting underscored the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to tackling AUD, emphasizing the need for both biological and psychological interventions to optimize patient care.

3. The ESBRA Mentorship Program: Fostering Stronger Connections. To promote stronger connections among European researchers, **ESBRA** introduced the **ECIC Mentorship Programs** during the recent ESBRA meeting in **Graz, Austria**. This new initiative provides an excellent opportunity for early-career researchers and more established scientists to engage in mentorship relationships that foster professional growth, knowledge exchange, and collaboration. Every ESBRA member has the opportunity to participate in the program either as a **Mentee** (Ph.D. students, postdocs, young PIs) or a **Mentor** (young PIs and Senior PIs).

Continuing Commitment to Research and Collaboration

Throughout 2024, ESBRA remained a key player in fostering collaboration across the global research community. By hosting these webinars and organizing events like the Nordmann Award Meeting, ESBRA facilitated the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of knowledge among researchers, clinicians, and policymakers working to address the public health challenge posed by alcohol use disorders.

The society also continued its advocacy for greater research funding and international cooperation, striving to make alcohol research more impactful and more aligned with real-world healthcare needs. •

We want to congratulate Prof Lucía Hipólito and Dr Jérôme Jeanblanc on their new joint funding application to study chronic pain and alcohol addiction.

Tackling Chronic Pain and Alcohol Addiction: A Translational Approach through the PainGutPFC Project funded by the Eranet Neuron initiative

Introduction

Chronic pain (CP) and alcohol use disorder (AUD) represent two significant health challenges worldwide, often presenting together and complicating treatment efforts. Both conditions are associated with complex neurobiological and systemic alterations, including those in the gut-brain axis, a bidirectional communication pathway involving the central nervous system and gut microbiota. The PainGutPFC project, funded by the ERA-NET NEURON initiative, seeks to explore the intertwined mechanisms linking CP and AUD to develop innovative, multimodal therapeutic approaches. This research aims to bridge the gap between laboratory findings and clinical applications, supporting the creation of personalized treatment strategies for affected individuals.

Project Overview

The PainGutPFC project focuses on the gut-brain axis, neuroinflammation, and the prefrontal cortex-nucleus accumbens (mPFC-NAc) pathway, areas known to play key roles in pain perception, emotional regulation, and addiction behaviors. This interdisciplinary project combines preclinical and clinical studies to evaluate how CP and AUD influence each other and to investigate the underlying neurobiological, microbiome, and behavioral factors. The project includes translational studies in both animal models and human subjects, examining how changes in brain-gut interactions could lead to new clinical interventions. Special attention is given to sex and gender differences, recognizing that CP and AUD impact men and women differently in terms of neurobiological responses and treatment outcomes.

Consortium and Collaborative Partners

The project is supported under the ERA-NET NEURON's Joint Transnational Call 2024, designed to promote cutting-edge research into brain-body interactions. The total project budget is approximately €1.1 million, allocated across five main partners, each specializing in different research areas to address this complex issue.

The PainGutPFC consortium is led by Prof. Lucía Teresa Hipólito Cubedo (University of Valencia, Spain), who brings extensive expertise in neuropharmacology, pain and addiction. The team

includes partners with complementary expertise, several of whom are part of the European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (ESBRA):

- Dr. Marina Romaní-Pérez (IATA-CSIC, Spain) focuses on gut-brain interactions and microbiome research.
- Dr. Jérôme Jeanblanc (University of Picardie Jules Verne, France) specializes in alcohol addiction and dopaminergic signaling.
- Dr. Maurice Dematteis (Grenoble University Hospital, France) brings expertise in neuropsychiatry and pain-related disorders.
- Dr. Rafal Rygula (Maj Institute of Pharmacology PAS, Poland) contributes insights into psychopathology and reinforcement sensitivity in both animal models and humans.

This collaborative framework fosters a translational approach, enabling findings in animal models to inform clinical research and vice versa.

Translational Impact and Future Applications

A core feature of the PainGutPFC project is its translational design, integrating animal and human data to facilitate real-world application of findings. The project aims to identify specific biomarkers in both humans and rodents that can predict vulnerability to chronic pain and AUD. By characterizing the neurobiological and microbiome changes associated with these conditions, PainGutPFC seeks to develop personalized diagnostic tools and interventions. Expected outcomes include a European guide for clinicians on CP and AUD prevention and intervention, as well as a specialized ChatGPT for chronic pain management, making advanced research insights accessible to healthcare providers and patients alike.

Conclusion

The PainGutPFC project exemplifies the power of translational research, addressing the intertwined challenges of CP and AUD. Through a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, the project aims to uncover the bidirectional interactions between the brain, gut, and behavior, paving the way for novel therapies and prevention strategies. By advancing our understanding of these complex conditions, the PainGutPFC team is setting a foundation for tailored, effective treatments that can improve quality of life for countless individuals. •

Congratulations also to ECIC members Sophie Leclercq and Olli Kärkkäinen, for their recent publication on blood metabolomic profiling in severe AUD!

Leclercq S, Ahmed H, Amadiou C, Petit G, Koistinen V, Leyrolle Q, Poncin M, Stärkel P, Kok E, Karhunen PJ, de Timary P, Laye S, Neyrinck AM, Kärkkäinen OK, Hanhineva K, Delzenne N. Blood metabolomic profiling reveals new targets in the management of psychological symptoms associated with severe alcohol use disorder. *Elife*. 2024 Nov 29;13:RP96937 •

Events, Awards, Grants

EVENTS

European Association for the Study on Liver (EASL) congress 2025

The upcoming EASL Congress 2025 will take place in the vibrant city of Amsterdam from 7-10 May. This meeting covers a wide range of liver research including toxicity derived from alcohol. Important dates are:

Early bird registration deadline January 14th 2025 and standard fee deadline May 6th 2025.

Late-breaker abstract submissions from February 26th to March 10th 2025.

Applications to bursaries to support trainees, postdocs, nurses and AHPs can be made during the abstract submission process. This and more information can be found at <https://www.easlcongress.eu/>

48th Annual RSA Scientific Meeting/ISBRA Congress

The Research Society on Alcohol in close collaboration with the International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism will be celebrating the 48th Annual meeting in New Orleans from June 21st to June 25th 2025. This meeting provides a community for sharing scientific discoveries, attracting and supporting career development of the next generation of alcohol researchers, disseminating scientific knowledge regarding

alcohol use to our members and the public, and raising public awareness and understanding of the health implications of alcohol use and alcohol-related harm.

Important dates are:

Continuing Education Workshops proposal submissions deadline: January 31st 2025.

Poster presentations abstract submission: January 31st 2025.

Awards proposal submissions: January 31st 2025.

More information can be found at https://rsa.societyconference.com/v2/?conf_id=10001&m=user&h=event/ev_ockv5&login=false

EBPS (European Behavioural Pharmacology Society) 21st Biennial meeting

The biennial meeting of the EBPS will take place in Almeria, Spain from 17th to 20th September 2025. This meeting provides an excellent forum to learn about and explore cutting-edge research at the intersection of neuroscience, pharmacology, and behavior, including alcohol addiction.

Important dates are:

Symposia Submission: January 10th 2025

Poster presentations abstract submission: March 10th 2025.

Travel Awards Application: March 10th 2025. •

AWARDS AND GRANTS

SWISS FOUNDATION FOR ALCOHOL RESEARCH RESEARCH GRANTS

The Swiss Foundation for Alcohol Research promotes scientific research in all alcohol-related areas and its relevance to health in Switzerland. When awarding funding, priority is given to smaller, innovative projects that address significant issues relating to alcohol policy, social prevention and human biology that have both scientific value and practical relevance for Swiss public health. The SFAR is particularly interested in supporting talented young researchers. Application deadline is April 1st 2025. More information can be found at: <https://www.alcoholresearch.ch/en/2.html>

JELLINEK MEMORIAL FUND

The 2024 Jellinek Memorial Fund Award for outstanding contribution to the advancement of knowledge on alcohol/alcoholism. Call for Nominations. Nominations are solicited for the 2024 Jellinek Memorial Fund Award to a scientist who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the alcohol/alcoholism field. Nominees must have contributed outstanding research in this specific (albeit broad) area, and should be someone who would provide an example and serve as a model for others who might be attracted to work in this field. In addition to a cash award of CDN\$5,000, the recipient is presented with a bust of the late E.M. Jellinek with an appropriate inscription.

Nominations for the 2024 Award are now open! More information at: <https://jellinekaward.org/> •

ESBRA Early-career Investigators Mentorship Program



To promote stronger connections among European researchers, ECIC introduced the ESBRA Mentorship Programs during the recent ESBRA meeting in Graz, Austria.

Every ESBRA member has the opportunity to participate in this program either as a Mentee (Ph.D. students, postdocs, young PIs) or a Mentor (young PIs and Senior PIs). As of now, the ECIC Mentorship pro-

grams have received six applications from prospective Mentees and over 30 applications from those interested in becoming Mentors.

We present two types of programs, as described below. We are confident that you will find the one that best suits your needs. If you need further information please do not hesitate to contact us at the following address : mentorship@esbra.com.

| | Program #1 | Program #2 | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| Who? | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Mentor Senior PI</td> <td>Mentee Junior PI Senior Postdoc</td> </tr> </table> | Mentor Senior PI | Mentee Junior PI Senior Postdoc | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Mentor Junior PI Senior PI</td> <td>Mentee PhD/MD Student Postdoc</td> </tr> </table> | Mentor Junior PI Senior PI | Mentee PhD/MD Student Postdoc |
| Mentor Senior PI | Mentee Junior PI Senior Postdoc | | | | | |
| Mentor Junior PI Senior PI | Mentee PhD/MD Student Postdoc | | | | | |
| How long? | 1 year | 1 year renewable | | | | |
| Commitment | Virtual meetings every 2 months + One seminar in each other's laboratories | Virtual meetings every 3 months If possible : 1 face to face meeting One seminar in each other's laboratories | | | | |
| Discussion Areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking Management of a lab/team Grant applications Recruitment tips Collaboration Technical advice Independence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific technical advice Development of independence and confidence in research Development of oral communication skills Provide motivational support Networking Job/Career opportunity Combination of clinical and research work | | | | |

To apply to the mentorship program, please fill this [form](#) and send it to mentorship@esbra.com •

contacts & links



European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism

How to become a member of ESBRA:

<https://www.esbra.com/membership>

ESBRA calendar:

<https://www.esbra.com/calendar>

Job opportunities:

<https://www.esbra.com/job-announcements>

ESBRA awards:

<https://www.esbra.com/awards>

Further links:

<https://www.esbra.com/links>

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[Alcohol and Alcoholism](#)

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