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Press Release

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EU promotes interdisciplinary tinnitus research through ESIT programme

3.8 million euros for the development of new research and treatment methods

Chronic tinnitus affects around 42 million people in Europe. For many sufferers, the annoying ringing in the ear leads to significant long-term reduction in their quality of life. The precise symptoms vary greatly, and at present there is no single cure. Meanwhile the number of patients is rising steadily, and could double by 2050 if current trends continue. There is an urgent need to encourage research on tinnitus, and to promote interdisciplinary work developing new concepts and sharing data. As part of its research and development programme “Horizon 2020”, the EU is making 3.8 million euros available for the “European School for Interdisciplinary Tinnitus Research” (ESIT), in order to gather data on a systematic interdisciplinary basis, to research new treatment methods, and to train 15 young scientists for work in the field. Innovative research methods are to be employed, the first genetic studies of tinnitus will be carried out, and the largest pan-European tinnitus database will be developed. The aim is to lay the foundation for an individualized and evidence-based treatment of tinnitus.

The ESIT programme is set to run for four years, and will be co-ordinated by the tinnitus centre at the Regensburg University Hospital. In all, twelve universities from ten EU member states and 34 other academic and non-academic partners will be participating in the project. It is the close co-operation of academic, clinical and industrial partners, and the involvement of patient organisations and health authorities that makes the programme so unique.

Dr Winfried Schlee, who co-ordinates the ESIT, explains: “The ESIT makes it possible for the first time ever to create a common foundation and a universally agreed framework for the future in what has so far been a badly fragmented research landscape. Tinnitus research requires a close co-operation of all disciplines, in order to find innovative individual



solutions for a highly diverse disorder profile. I am delighted that with the support of the EU and an excellent array of partner institutions we have made a significant step towards realizing our goals." Among the industrial partners are experts and technological leaders whose solutions are already being used in tinnitus research and treatment. These include the BEE Group, Brain Products, Cochlear, Del Bo Technologia, Medien LB, Pinpoint Scotland, Sensorian, Sivantos und Sonormed. "The ESIT gives us the unique opportunity to bring all the key players together in a single project which will set the course for the tinnitus research and treatment of the future. We are very pleased to be a part of this", says Jörg Land, founder and director of Sonormed GmbH.

Professor Deborah Hall, Deputy Director of the NIHR Nottingham Biomedical Research Centre, University of Nottingham (NHBRU), stands up for high standards in the academic education of the 15 PhD students in ESIT. She explains: "ESIT will be the first ever co-ordinated academic training programme for early-career researchers seeking to pursue a career in this growing field. The ESIT training is inspiring because it focuses on the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research, as well as encompassing the more traditional elements of knowledge-based skills and professional standards training. ESIT training promotes closer international interaction because it provides all participants with study opportunities in other organisations and in other EU countries. These are truly exciting times for tinnitus research."

The ESIT partners cover the clinical fields of audiology, otolaryngology, psychology, psychiatry and neurology. Researchers from the following fields are also involved: epidemiology, genetics, neuroscience, biomedical engineering, software development and data mining. In the first instance, all the fields will conduct coordinated research and development, taking as their starting point the tinnitus treatment strategies which are currently best documented: cognitive behavior therapy, acoustic stimulation and electrical or magnetic neurostimulation.

With the final approval of EU funds, the ESIT programme officially begins in April 2017, and will be financed for a period of four years. The first job offers are already published and interested students are invited to apply within the next few weeks. Details of the programme and updates on its progress will be released online over a central internet presence which can be found under <http://esit.tinnitusresearch.net>.

The ESIT Partners

Scholarship Candidates

The ESIT programme will finance 15 research positions for doctoral students across the EU. These junior scholars will work at the following universities, supervised jointly by the universities' own chairs and the ESIT's central training programme.

- Universitätsklinikum Regensburg, DE
- University of Nottingham, UK
- Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri, IT
- Karolinska Institutet, SE

- Fundación Pública Andaluza para la Investigación Sanitaria de Andalucía Oriental, ES
- Universität Ulm, DE
- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen , NL
- Maastricht University, NL
- Universität Zürich, CH
- Paris-Lodron Universität Salzburg, AT
- Niwerytet Medyczny w Łodzi, PL
- Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, FR

Academic Partners

Six additional academic partners will support the education of the PhD students and their research:

- Universidad de Granada, ES
- Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg, DE
- Julius Maximilians Universität Würzburg, DE
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, BE
- University College London, UK
- Tartu Ülikool, EE

Industrial Partners

In order to facilitate the transfer of academic knowledge and technical innovations, ESIT promotes the mutual exchange between research institutions and industrial partners:

- BEE Group AG, CH
- Brain Products GmbH, DE
- Cochlear Technology Centre Belgium, BE
- Del Bo Technologia per l'ascoloto SRL, IT
- Medien LB Medien für Lehrpläne und Bildungsstandards GmbH, DE
- Pinpoint Scotland Ltd, UK
- Sensorion SA, FR
- Sivantos GmbH, DE
- Sonormed GmbH, DE
- Soterix Medical Inc., US

Patient organizations and public health sector

From the beginning of the project, ESIT wants to include the patient voice in the research process. Therefore, the following organizations are included as partners:

- British Tinnitus Association, UK
- European Federation of Tinnitus Associations, DE
- France acouphenes, FR
- Ménière's Society, UK
- Tinnitus Research Initiative, DE
- Tinnitus Hub, UK
- Gesundheitsamt Regensburg, DE

Clinical Partners

Numerous clinical partners participate in the education of the PhD students and the conduction of the clinical studies:

- Adelante, NL
- UZA Antwerp University Hospital, NL
- Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, UK
- Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris (APHP), FR
- Klinik und Poliklinik für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie der Universität Regensburg am medbo Bezirksklinikum Regensburg, DE
- Charité Berlin, DE
- Universitätsspital Zürich, CH
- Tinnitus Clinic Athens, GR
- European Hospital Roma, IT
- Niwersytet Medyczny w Łodzi, PL
- CUF Infante Santo Hospital, PT

About ESIT

The European School for Interdisciplinary Tinnitus Research (ESIT) is an education program funded by the European Union with the goal to promote inter-disciplinary tinnitus research in Europe. Within the "Horizon 2020" program, the EU supports the ESIT program with 3.8 Mio. Euro for the next four years. ESIT educates 15 PhD students across Europe with outstanding academic as well as personal skills to perform excellent tinnitus research. Twelve universities from ten European countries and 34 academic, clinical and industrial partners will be coordinated by the University Clinic Regensburg to carry out the tinnitus research. Among the goals of the ESIT research project is the development of individualized treatment methods, first genetic studies on tinnitus, and building up the largest pan-European database for systematic and inter-disciplinary tinnitus research.

Further information to ESIT: <http://esit.tinnitusresearch.net>.

Further information to current tinnitus research:

<http://journal.frontiersin.org/researchtopic/4725/towards-an-understanding-of-tinnitus-heterogeneity>.

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Photo



UKR_Tinnitus.jpg:
ESIT pushes the research on tinnitus
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