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Neuroendocrine Immune Networks in Ageing (NINA)

Current demographic trends indicate that by the year 2020 almost 1 in 5 of the European population will be aged over 65. However, although life expectancy is increasing in the developed world, the period of good health enjoyed by its people is not keeping pace. The ageing population is thus a major health and economic issue for Europe.

Although ageing is a complex process, we know much about its actions at the cellular and tissue level. In contrast, our understanding of how the various age-related changes interact to result in frailty and disease is incomplete. There is therefore a pressing need to carry out multidisciplinary research to identify factors contributing to age-related frailty and to develop interventions to promote healthy ageing.

While Europe has many excellent research teams working on age-related diseases, such as neurodegeneration, there is little attempt to pool resources and identify underlying common age-related processes that predispose to pathology and represent rational targets for intervention. In addition, there is a lack of scientists trained in multidisciplinary ageing research and the challenge of an ageing population will not be met unless we increase research capacity in this area.

NINA is a multi-site ITN that will make a significant impact upon research capacity by training 12 early stage researchers and 2 experienced researchers, integrating research and training at 10 world class European institutes. Fellows will benefit from the expertise of academic partners and training will be enhanced by the intersectoral experience provided by two industrial partners and a non-governmental organisation.

NINA will tackle crucial health research challenges by directing the multidisciplinary programme at the identification of key factors driving the ageing process. NINA will focus on the age-related changes influencing the interactions of the brain, immune and endocrine systems to understand how these changes impact upon health.

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