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The immunologist from Mount Sinai Hospital in New York receives the ACES-Margarita Salas Award in Stockholm from the Secretary General for Research of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, Eva Ortega-Paíno.

Ana Fernández-Sesma: “The legacy of Margarita Salas continues to inspire many scientists to persevere and pave the way for new generations”.

- The Third Edition of the ACES – Margarita Salas Award, dedicated to the category of Biomedical Sciences, has recognised the research excellence and the impact of the scientific contribution of this virologist and immunologist born in Cáceres and working in New York at the interface between immunology and virology.
- The awards ceremony, held at the headquarters of the Spanish Embassy in Stockholm, was the culmination of a two-day programme that included a symposium in homage to Margarita Salas —considered one of the most important Spanish scientists in Spanish science— at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, with the presence of Swedish and Spanish scientists as well as a gala dinner.
- The ACES – Margarita Salas Awards were created in 2021 to recognise the scientific work of Spanish researchers with an internationally acclaimed impact. The Awards are promoted and organised by the Association of Spanish Scientists in Sweden (ACES) and supported by the Spanish Embassy in Sweden, the Margarita Salas Foundation and the Ramón Areces Foundation.

Madrid, March 4th, 2024.- The III Edition of the ACES – Margarita Salas Award took place last Friday March 4th, 2024 at a ceremony held at the Spanish Embassy in Stockholm, with the presence of several members of the Swedish and Spanish scientific community and the celebration of a symposium in homage to the Asturian scientist.

The prize in this Third Edition, dedicated to the area of Biomedical Sciences, has been awarded to **Professor Ana Fernández-Sesma, Director of the Department of Microbiology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York**, from where she leads educational and research work and nurtures an academic culture that promotes knowledge of virology, vaccinology, immunology and microbiology from an innovative approach. Since the end of 2023, her name has been included in the Forbes magazine list of “The 100 most influential women in Spain”.



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“As a Spanish scientist who has developed her entire career abroad, it is a great honour and privilege for me to receive the ACES – Margarita Salas 2023 award. An award that shows that science has no borders and that Margarita Salas’ legacy continues to inspire many women scientists to persevere on our journey and to continue paving the way for new generations”, said Ana Fernández Sesma on receiving her award, which comes with a cash prize of €10,000, from the Secretary General for Research of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, Eva Ortega-Paíno.

The third edition of these awards, promoted and organised by the Association of Spanish Scientists in Sweden (ACES) with the support of the Spanish Embassy in Sweden and sponsored by the Margarita Salas Foundation and the Ramón Areces Foundation, included a symposium in homage to Margarita Salas at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences with the participation of Professor Gunilla Karlsson Hedestam, from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences; Professor Gerhart Wagner, from the University of Uppsala; and the Biochemist and Researcher at the Severo Ochoa Molecular Biology Centre in Madrid (CSIC-UAM), Alicia del Prado, one of the last Disciples of Margarita Salas.

RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE AND MENTORSHIP

The jury recognised Ana Fernández-Sesma for her research excellence and the impact of her scientific contribution at the interface between immunology and virology, where she studies the modulation of the immune system by a wide range of viruses that impact our health, such as dengue, influenza, human immunodeficiency virus, Zika and SARS-CoV-2. The jury members also highlighted the contribution of Professor Fernández-Sesma, a great advocate of vaccines, “to the mentorship for the development of scientific vocations of future students in the areas of science and technology”.

Professor Fernández-Sesma has been a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) from 2018 to 2022, during which time she also chaired the Steering Committee of the NIH/NIAID Human Immunology Project Consortium. She is currently involved in several NIH-funded multi-investigator projects and is the principal investigator of the Human Immunology Project Consortium on Viral Immunity and Vaccination. From 2010-2020 she co-directed the Microbiology Core Training Area at the Icahn Mount Sinai Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

She has also co-authored numerous publications in virology and immunology journals, is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Virology*, and is a section editor for mSphere and PLoS Pathogens. She is a member of the American Academy of Microbiology and a recipient of the Jacobi Medallion and Award of Excellence. A faculty member of the Icahn Mount Sinai Institute for Medical Education, she is also an honorary alumni of the University of Salamanca (Spain).

In the words of **Lucía Viñuela Salas, Chief of the Margarita Salas Foundation and daughter of the illustrious researcher**, “this is a very special edition for us, as it is the first one we support as the Margarita Salas Foundation since our launch in February 2023, and also because of the category awarded and the profile of the winner, which highlights her contribution to mentorship and her promotion of scientific vocations of future students in the areas of science and technology, an aspect directly linked to one of the main goals with which this foundation was born”.



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The **Managing Director of the Ramón Areces Foundation, Raimundo Pérez-Hernández**, expressed his most sincere congratulations to the winner of this edition, as “awards are always a stimulus for those who receive them, but also a fair recognition of a job well done”. He also highlighted the important work carried out by the Association of Spanish Scientists in Sweden which, “in addition to representing our scientists in that country, builds valuable bridges in scientific exchange with Swedish researchers”.

The **Ambassador of Spain in Sweden, Ms. Cristina Latorre Sancho**, acknowledged the prominent role played by ACES in Sweden and within the global framework of Spanish science, congratulating Ana Fernández-Sesma “for her work and for this well-deserved award.

For his part, the **head of the organisation of the ACES – Margarita Salas awards, Francisco Vilaplana**, said that “for the Association of Spanish Scientists in Sweden it is a privilege that Professor Ana Fernández-Sesma joins the triad of winners, not only for her scientific excellence, but also for her informative work in the defence of vaccines. This edition represents the consolidation of these awards as a mechanism of scientific diplomacy to recognise the contribution of Spanish scientists at the international level.”

Ana Fernández-Sesma’s candidacy has been proposed by the Association of Spanish Scientists in the United States (ECUSA), and selected from among the various “excellent level” candidacies submitted from different parts of the world by the associations that make up the Network of Associations of Spanish Scientists Abroad (RAICEX). Ana Fernández-Sesma thus joins this year’s prestigious list of award winners, which includes Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer, winner in 2021 in the category of Physics, Mathematics and Engineering, and Professor Francisco Mojica, winner of the 2022 edition in the category of Chemical and Environmental Sciences.

The ACES – Margarita Salas Awards draw on the figure of the illustrious Asturian scientist, an outstanding CSIC researcher at the Severo Ochoa Molecular Biology Centre (CBMSO) in Madrid and considered to be one of the most important Spanish scientists. The uniqueness of these awards lies in the fact that they are organised by Spanish researchers abroad, with the aim of recognising the universal nature and excellence of Spanish scientists at an international level and to serve as a tool for disseminating their contribution to society.

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