

News Release

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Merck Commits €1.5 million to the Grant for Fertility Innovation (GFI) for 2016/17

- **Investment reflects company's commitment to innovation in fertility research**
- **Globally, six projects receive funding from this grant cycle**

Darmstadt, Germany, July 6, 2016 – Merck, a leading science and technology company, today announced it would continue to support the advancement of medical science in the field of fertility through the Grant for Fertility Innovation (GFI) program by awarding grants totalling €1.5 million in 2016/17. The announcement was made at the 32nd annual meeting of European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE), currently taking place in Helsinki, Finland.

Launched in 2009 at ESHRE, the GFI is dedicated to transforming innovative translational fertility research projects into concrete health solutions to improve the outcomes of assisted reproductive technologies (ART). This year, 6 winning projects were selected from 112 global proposals with the common goal of improving the chances for couples to conceive a baby. The grant will be divided up into three milestone payments per project.

“The Grant for Fertility Innovation reflects our unprecedented commitment to improve outcomes for patients in need of new fertility solutions,” said Dr. Steven Hildemann, Global Chief Medical Officer and Head of Global Medical and Safety at Merck. “The GFI program has already enabled advanced researchers to accelerate scientific discovery and translational work to fertility care by leveraging an impactful global network of expertise across the academic and industry continuum.”

The GFI awardees were announced during a ceremony at ESHRE on July 5th.



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- **Stephen Andrew Krawetz**, Ph.D. - Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit, USA – Project “A Retrospective Controlled Cohort Study of Sperm RNAs Guiding the 2 Treatment of the Idiopathic Infertile couple”
- **Lynne O’Shea**, B.Sc. (Hons.), Ph.D. - UCD School of Medicine and Medical Science, University College Dublin, Ireland – Project “Using a biomarker of oocyte quality to improve embryo selection during assisted reproduction”
- **Paola Piomboni**, PhD- University of Siena, Italy – Project “Exosomal Profile of the Receptive Endometrium: A source of non-invasive biomarkers for Guiding of a Successful Embryo Implantation”
- **Qingling Yang** received his Ph.D. – Reproductive Medical Center of the first Affiliated Hospital of Zhengzhou University, China - Project “Telomere length test of cell free genomic DNA in spent embryo medium as a non-invasive biomarker for assessing embryo developmental potential”
- **Professor Ernest Hung Yu Ng Professor William Shu -biu Yeung** – University of Hong Kong, China – Project “Human embryonic stem cell-derived trophoblastic spheroids (BAP-EB) as a predictive tool for endometrial receptivity and pregnancy rate of in vitro fertilization treatment”
- **Professor Fulvio Zullo** - University Magna Graecia of Catanzaro, Italy – Project “Periostin a new non-invasive parameter for evaluating oocyte/blastocyst quality and its impact on endometrial receptivity”

About the Grant for Fertility Innovation (GFI)

Merck announced the initiation of the GFI program in 2009 to support the advancement of science and innovative technologies in the fertility field. This grant is awarded every year to translational research projects that can potentially improve baby birth rate for the benefit of the patients. Each project is blinded and evaluated by a jury of experts according to five criteria: support to increase baby birth rate; innovative research; scientific rationale; feasibility and practical utility.

For further information about the GFI and how to apply for next year’s grants, please visit: www.grantforfertilityinnovation.com

About Merck

Merck is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 50,000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2015, Merck generated sales of € 12.85 billion in 66 countries.

Founded in 1668, Merck is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck, Darmstadt, Germany holds the global rights to the Merck name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.