Cell sources (autolo-gous & allo-geneic)

Ira Espuny Camacho, Ph.D

Ira Espuny-Camacho was born in an olive tree region of the south of Spain, where her passion for science started. She completed her Bachelor and Masters degree in Chemical Sciences, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in the University Autonoma in Madrid. Soon after the completion of her academic degree she enrolled into a pre-doctoral program (2001) and in the Ph.D program (2002) in Biomedical sciences at the KU Leuven University in Belgium. During her doctoral work, in the laboratory of Bart De Strooper, she focused on the search of new therapeutic molecular targets for the treatment of Alzheimer's neurodegenerative disease patients. She was awarded a Ph.D in Medical Sciences by the KU Leuven University in 2007. In 2008, she moved to the lab of Pierre Vanderhaeghen, at the ULB, Brussels, where she focused on a novel approach to study human brain development and disease: The use of human pluripotent stem cells. During this scientific experience she pioneered the differentiation of human pluripotent stem cells towards cortical neurons in vitro and its application in vitro and in vivo to study brain disease and brain repair.

As a part of her postdoctoral training in 2013 she moved back to the lab of Bart De Strooper where she participated in an interuniversity collaboration with Pierre Vanderhaeghen working on the generation of an in vivo disease model from pluripotent stem cells to study Alzheimer's disease. In 2017 she moved to the laboratory of Elena Cattaneo in the University of Milan, Italy, where she was awarded a Marie Curie MSCA-IF to focus on the generation of hPSC-derived cortical and ventral telencephalic organoid models for the study Huntington's disease. In September 2019 she moved back to Belgium to become a Tenured Principal Investigator/Logisticien de Recherche at GIGA/Uliege working on the generation of hPSC-derived brain organoids for in vitro approaches and in vivo transplantation into the mouse brain as models to understand brain development and disease.

Yoke Chin Chai

Dr. Yoke Chin Chai is a senior postdoctoral scientist at the Stem Cell Institute Leuven (SCIL) of KU Leuven, Belgium. His current research aims at developing perfusable vascularized 3D organoids and tissue-specific hydrogels for neuronal and cardiac disease modelling and drug discovery. He received a PhD degree in Tissue Engineering & Biomaterials with Prof. Frank P. Luyten at the Prometheus division of Skeletal Tissue Engineering, KU Leuven, focused on deciphering the osteoinductive effect of calcium phosphate on bone regeneration and its translation into surface functionalization of 3D porous scaffold via perfusion electrodeposition and cell-mediated biomineralization techniques. He was a holder of the prestigious postdoctoral research fellowship from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), a valorization manager in gene therapy and regenerative medicine at Free University Brussels (VUB), and received a PhD scholarship from the KU Leuven and the PhD international academic training fellowship (SLAI) from the Ministry of Higher Education/University of Malaya, Malaysia. In 2012, he co-founded the 1st Belgian Symposium on Tissue Engineering (BSTE) together with Prof. Luyten, which since then has become an annual event at national and international levels. Dr. Chai has generated 76 scientific publication (28 papers in international peer-reviewed journals; 8 first author papers), 5 book chapters, with an h-index = 16 (Web of Science). Other scientific outputs includes >40 abstracts/posters at national and international conferences some of which selected as best oral or poster presentation awards, and 2 medals in scientific exhibitions. He has extensive experience in national and EU-H2020 research collaborations, and currently a co-PIs in three research grants on "Alzheimer's disease-on-Chip and "Lab Meat initiative".