

Press Release

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Additional 5 Million Euro Funding for Aging Research in Jena, Germany

The Leibniz Institute on Aging (FLI) in Jena, Germany, was approved 5 million EUR additional funding by the German *Joint Science Conference* (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK), which thus implemented a proposal by the Senate of the German Leibniz Association. The funding is to be used to build up a new research focus on “Microbiome and Aging” at the Institute. In parallel, a recruitment effort to fill an associated tenured W3-professorship has already been initiated.

Jena. The Leibniz Institute on Aging – Fritz Lipmann Institute (FLI) in Jena, Germany, was awarded 5 million EUR additional funding from the German Federal Government and the Federal State of Thuringia in order to build up a new research focus on “Microbiome and Aging” at the Institute. The FLI had applied for this so-called “Sondertatbestand” (Temporary Extraordinary Item of Expenditure) in the course of the Institute’s scientific evaluation in 2016. “We are extraordinarily happy about this funding decision”, says Prof. Dr. Alfred Nordheim, who only recently has taken on the scientific leadership of FLI. “With this additional research focus, the FLI can further sharpen and strengthen its research profile in the area of aging research”, he continues. The first step towards initiation of the new research focus will be the appointment of a separately funded, tenured W3-professorship in collaboration with the Medical Faculty of the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. The professor will act as senior group leader at FLI and, furthermore, will be complemented by two additional new junior research groups at the FLI.

Microbiome: The Very Smallest Inhabitants of Our Body

The human microbiome comprises all microorganisms that inhabit the body surfaces of human beings. These microorganisms, primarily bacteria, live in symbiosis with humans: E.g. in the intestine, they help us to break down nutrition to its elements and, in return, they subsist on our body. There is increasing evidence that the composition of commensal bacteria on body surfaces like skin or intestinal walls changes during aging. *Vice versa*, this aging-associated change in the microbiome influences the way we age. This is controlled by bacterial metabolite signaling and epigenetic responses to this signaling in target tissues. The FLI intends to incorporate the new research program, aiming to understand changes in microbiome composition during aging and its consequences for human organismal aging – a focus which is novel at the international level.

Further information on Appointment Procedure of the Tenured W3 Professorship “Microbiome and Aging”

<http://www.leibniz-fli.de/career-development/career-detailpage/news/professorship-functional-microbiota-host-interactions-in-aging-w3/>

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Background information

The **Leibniz Institute on Aging – Fritz Lipmann Institute (FLI)** – upon its inauguration in 2004 – was the first German research organization dedicated to research on the process of aging. More than 330 employees from over 30 nations explore the molecular mechanisms underlying aging processes and age-associated diseases. For more information, please visit www.leibniz-fli.de.

The **Leibniz Association** connects 93 independent research institutions that range in focus from the natural, engineering and environmental sciences via economics, spatial and social sciences to the humanities. Leibniz Institutes address issues of social, economic and ecological relevance. They conduct knowledge-driven and applied basic research, maintain scientific infrastructure and provide research-based services. The Leibniz Association identifies focus areas for knowledge transfer to policy-makers, academia, business and the public. Leibniz Institutes collaborate intensively with universities – in the form of “WissenschaftsCampi” (thematic partnerships between university and non-university research institutes), for example – as well as with industry and other partners at home and abroad. They are subject to an independent evaluation procedure that is unparalleled in its transparency. Due to the institutes’ importance for the country as a whole, they are funded jointly by the Federation and the Länder, employing some 18,600 individuals, including 9,500 researchers. The entire budget of all the institutes is approximately 1.7 billion EUR. See www.leibniz-association.eu for more information.

Picture



Figure: In the future, the FLI will analyze how and why the microbiome changes during aging and how this affects the aging process. (credit: Fotolia/Kästner)