

Press Release

Two Young Researchers from US Institutions among the Six Winners of the 12th Edition of the Fellowships Promoted by IBSA Foundation for Scientific Research

- *Vanessa Lopez Polo and Enchen Zhou are among the six winners of the 2024 Fellowships, the program promoted by IBSA Foundation for scientific research which has offered six €32,000 scholarships.*
- *The award ceremony was held today in Milan (Italy), where the 2025 call for proposals was also officially launched.*

Parsippany, N.J., **May 27, 2025** – Research means investing in the future. This is the guiding principle behind the IBSA Foundation Fellowships program, which for over a decade, has supported talented young researchers from universities and research institutions around the world. The program awards grants to promote innovative and potentially groundbreaking projects in lesser-explored scientific fields; and has been a constantly growing success, as demonstrated by the 259 applications received for the 2024 edition, which marked a new record, across five therapeutic areas.

This year, the scientific board of IBSA Foundation selected, among others, two young researchers from Californian research institutes: **Vanessa Lopez Polo, Ph.D. (University of California, San Francisco)**, 32, and of Spanish origins, and **Enchen Zhou, Ph.D. (University of California San Diego)**, 34, of Chinese heritage.

Vanessa Lopez Polo, a researcher at the Cardiovascular Research Institute UCSF, received the award in the Healthy Aging/Regenerative Medicine category for her project “***Exploring the role of macrophage-mediated heterophagy in aging and its potential for enhancing tissue health,***” which investigates heterophagy, a key cellular quality control mechanism essential for tissue homeostasis. The project aims to understand how aging affects this process and how new therapies might be developed to promote healthy aging by modulating the immune system.

Enchen Zhou, who is based at the Glass Laboratory – UC San Diego, was awarded in the Endocrinology category for his project “***Targeting Intestinal-Specific Transcription Factors to Enhance GLP-1 Release: A Novel Approach for Treating Obesity, Diabetes, and***

MASLD". This study focuses on improving the regulation of glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1), a key therapeutic target for cardiometabolic diseases such as obesity and diabetes.

"More than ever, it is critically important that we support young and talented researchers in their scientific endeavors. Here at IBSA, we are proud that our Foundation awards these fellowships so that these researchers can conduct cutting-edge science that can work towards improving patients' lives", stated **Carolyn Kong, PharmD, Chief Business and Medical Affairs Officer, IBSA USA.**

Since its launch in 2012, the IBSA Foundation Fellowship program has attracted increasing interest, with **1,645 project** submissions from **researchers under the age of 40** and from **60 countries**. Over twelve editions, **58 projects have been funded, totaling €1.6 million**. Each fellowship, now worth €32,000, is awarded to research projects in five traditionally underexplored scientific areas: dermatology, endocrinology, fertility/urology, pain medicine/rheumatology/orthopedics and healthy aging/regenerative medicine. A particularly noteworthy statistic is the high number of submissions from female researchers: 1,041 out of 1,645 applications, or around 63%, which testifies to their increasingly central role in international scientific research.

"Supporting the talent of young researchers represents for IBSA Foundation a strategic investment, driving scientific progress and fostering a society that is more aware and better equipped to face future challenges. In a context where access to a scientific career is increasingly complex, our Fellowships serve as a tangible tool to recognize merit and promote innovation," stated **Silvia Misiti, Director of IBSA Foundation for scientific research.**

At the Milan (Italy) event, **IBSA Foundation announced the opening of the call for proposals for the 2025 Fellowships**. As previously held in 2024, the new edition will award six €32,000 grants in the same five scientific areas: dermatology, endocrinology, fertility/urology, pain medicine/rheumatology/orthopedics and healthy aging/regenerative medicine. The sixth scholarship will be assigned to the category that receives the highest number of applications.

Beginning this year, the IBSA Foundation Research Equity Prize will also be introduced: worth €5,000, the prize will be awarded to the best scientific project developed in a laboratory, research institute, or university based in a developing country.

Researchers wishing to apply must submit their proposals by **January 31, 2026**, through [the platform](#).

For further information:

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About IBSA

IBSA (*Institut Biochimique SA*) is a Swiss pharmaceutical multinational with 20 subsidiaries across Europe, China, and the United States. Its products are available in over 90 countries, and its R&D activities focus on 10 therapeutic areas. In 2025, IBSA will celebrate the 40th anniversary of its acquisition by current President and CEO, Arturo Licenziati, who has transformed the company into a multinational corporation employing over 2,300 personnel worldwide. IBSA's growth and development can be attributed to its ability to innovate by refining well-known molecules, as well as to its commitment to looking to the future responsibly and transparently, thanks to the dedication and dynamism of its people.

About IBSA Foundation for scientific research

Established in 2012 in Lugano by the pharmaceutical company IBSA (*Institut Biochimique SA*), IBSA Foundation for scientific research is the main promoter of IBSA Group's social responsibility activities.

The Foundation promotes "Science for all" through accessible information and activities that unite scientific and humanistic culture. Its initiatives include high-level forums featuring internationally renowned scientists, educational events, conferences on art-and-science and health-and-culture and research scholarships in various areas of basic and clinical research.