

## **Harvard Medical School and Portugal announce major initiative to foster translational research and education**

Harvard Medical School and the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education today announced plans to enter into a long-term collaboration to significantly expand translational research and health information across Portugal's medical schools and main research laboratories. In addition, the program will provide HMS and its affiliated academic hospitals expanded opportunities for collaborations in translational research and education. The program will be officially launched at an HMS–Portugal signing ceremony in Lisbon on May 21.

“This relationship is an exciting step in allowing Portuguese Medical Schools and research labs to collaborate on medical education and translational research, which is critical to the future of Portugal and a key component of Harvard Medical School's mission,” says Jose Mariano Gago, the Portuguese Minister of Science and Technology and Higher Education. “The creation of the HMS–Portugal Program expands upon successful collaborations already in place in many leading American universities. This will bring new academic and research insights to areas that are fundamental to every citizen and country.”

“This important collaboration contains all the elements that we look for in international projects – it is educationally based; it facilitates collaborative science; and it will help advance health care in the host country,” says Harvard Provost Steven E. Hyman.

“I'm particularly pleased that translational research is so central to this new program,” says Jeffrey S. Flier, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at HMS. “We have been investing many resources into that area here at the medical school, and we look forward to enhancing our existing program through the opportunities arising from our collaboration with Portuguese colleagues in this new and innovative partnership.”

The wide-ranging initiative will involve professors, researchers and students from the 7 schools of medicine in Portugal, as well as the country's main biomedical research laboratories. At Harvard University, the program will involve researchers from HMS and affiliated institutions together with faculty and students from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Harvard School of Public Health, and the Kennedy School of Government. These Portuguese and Harvard colleagues will:

- Create a program that facilitates new translational and clinical research. A total of 12 collaborative projects will be supported in areas related to human disease.
- Launch and streamline post-graduate medical training, including new Junior and Senior Clinical Research and Career Development Awards for Portuguese MD trainees.
- Produce and publish medical and health information for the general public, and distribute educational material to medical students and health professionals in Portugal.

This long term collaboration began in 2007 with an assessment conducted by HMS. According to Portuguese Secretary of State Manuel Heitor, “the HMS–Portugal Program

will help modernize and improve the quality of medical education in Portugal, which is today a priority that must be addressed with respect to best international practices. Moreover, it must include the broadening of cooperation between Portuguese medical schools and Associated Laboratories and R&D institutions active in the field of biomedical and health sciences in such a way as to spur the creation of a truly competitive level of training at the international level.”

The translational research activities are designed to help populate Portuguese research institutions with an increasingly sophisticated clinical and translational research capacity, and to expand the rate and quality of Portuguese clinical and translational research contributions to the international community. The program is also designed to foster long-lasting collaborative ventures, both within Portugal and between Portuguese and Harvard research groups.

The activities on health information will be based in Portugal and led by Portuguese academics. HMS will provide training and content through its Harvard Health Publications Division (HHP), which has 33 years of experience creating and disseminating health information for the general public.

“In recent years, the general public has grown increasingly interested in learning about health, and being involved in decisions about their own health care,” says Anthony L. Komaroff, Editor in Chief of HHP, and Professor of Medicine at HMS. “HMS has been a leader among academic medical institutions in creating and distributing high quality health information for the general public. It will be a challenge and pleasure to work with our colleagues in Portugal on such an effort.”

The program will also include workshops, retreats and symposia to promote a sense of community, provide networking opportunities, contribute to the ongoing educational effort via formal classroom instruction, and provide presentation and public speaking opportunities for both junior and established participants. Over time, these events will help draw together the growing number of Portuguese clinical and translational investigators into a strong, vibrant, and interconnected community.

“We look forward to working closely with our Portuguese partners as we implement the clinical and translational research and education programs in the HMS–Portugal Program,” says David E. Golan, Dean for Graduate Education at HMS. “We anticipate that these programs will be a model for the engagement of HMS faculty and trainees in collaborative, international research and education programs in the future.”

“I have been fortunate to participate in the design stages of the HMS–Portugal Program, an experience that provided me with the wonderful opportunity to meet with lots of colleagues in Portugal while jointly articulating our dreams for this collaboration,” says Tomas Kirchhausen, HMS Director of the HMS–Portugal Program, and Professor of Cell Biology at HMS. “I look forward to engaging in many years of collaborative efforts in scientific research, education and health information.”

Portuguese medical schools and biomedical research centers are in charge of the overall coordination of the program in liaison with Harvard Medical School under the supervision of the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and the Knowledge Society Agency (UMIC). External evaluation will be done by an independent review board to be nominated by the FCT.

Within the framework of the “Partnerships for the Future” program launched by the Portuguese Government in 2006, the partnership with Harvard Medical School institutionalizes a national network aimed at modernizing medical education, improving specialized education in health sciences, building a clinical and translational research capacity, and cooperatively producing/distributing new educational material.

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