PRESS RELEASE

**Promotion of Young Researchers at the German Diabetes Center**

**Maren Carstensen-Kirberg Receives Award from Dr. Eickelberg Foundation for Biomarker Research**

**Dr. Maren Carstensen-Kirberg, research associate at the German Diabetes Center (DDZ), has been awarded the Dr. Eickelberg Foundation Prize 2017 for her research into biomarkers. An interdisciplinary team received the project grant for their project investigating the importance of the pro-inflammatory effect of the biomarker omentin on cells in adipose tissue.**

**Düsseldorf (DDZ)** – The young researcher Dr. Maren Carstensen-Kirberg has been awarded the prize of the Dr. Eickelberg Foundation 2017. She received the award for her scientific work on the association of circulating SFRP5 protein with cardiometabolic risk factors and prediabetes/type 2 diabetes in a large population-based cohort, the KORA study.[[1]](#footnote-1) Studies suggest that SFRP5 protein has a positive effect on insulin sensitivity, inflammation, and cardiovascular risk in several models. The protein‘s relevance for cardiometabolic diseases in humans is controversial. In her work, Carstensen-Kirberg succeeded in identifying the protein SFRP5 as a new biomarker candidate in the prevention of cardiometabolic diseases. The work was published in the international journal *Cardiovascular Diabetology*.

“Thanks to funding from the Dr. Eickelberg Foundation, pioneering work in diabetes research published in internationally recognized scientific journals can be made visible and rewarded," said Professor Michael Roden, scientific director and chairman of the DDZ, on the occasion of the awards ceremony. Awards are immensely important motivating factors in the life of a scientist, since many projects take a long time," Roden went on to say.

In addition to the prize of 1500 euros, a project grant was awarded by the Dr. Eickelberg Foundation to an interdisciplinary team led by Corinna Niersmann from the Inflammation research group (Institute of Clinical Diabetology) and Kerstin Grieß from the young investigator group Beta Cell Defects (Institute of Beta Cell Biology). The team is investigating the neutralization of the pro-inflammatory effect of the biomarker omentin on cells in adipose tissue (adipocytes).[[2]](#footnote-2) The project aims to make an innovative contribution to the effects of inflammatory cytokines in adipose tissue in order to derive new therapeutic approaches against diabetes. The research group will receive 3,500 euros in funding for this project.

The German Diabetes Center itself also awarded project funding within the framework of the Training and Feasibility Grants (TFG) to a three-person team consisting of Dr. Dominik Pesta and Dr. Elisabetta De Filippo (both: Institute of Clinical Diabetology) and Dr. Torben Stermann (Institute of Clinical Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry). The trio is investigating the skeletal muscle cells of untrained and endurance-trained people as well as patients with type 2 diabetes in connection with intracellular lipid treatment.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Düsseldorf-based Dr. Eickelberg Foundation was established in 2011/2012. The committed women's rights activist, city planner and artist, Dr. Gisela Eickelberg, suffered from diabetes throughout her life. The purpose of the foundation is to promote science in research into diabetes mellitus. The Dr. Eickelberg Foundation Prize and the Dr. Eickelberg Project Grant will be awarded for the fifth time in 2018.

**Keywords:**

Diabetes, research, biomarker, Inflammation

**Photos:**

**Photo 1 (from left to right):** Prof. Dr. Michael Roden, scientific director of the DDZ, Dr. Maren Carstensen-Kirberg, winner of the Dr. Eickelberg Foundation Prize, and Andreas Fidelak, administrative director of the DDZ.

**Photo 2 (from left to right)**: Congratulations to the award winners of the Dr. Eickelberg Foundation's project grant. Prof. Dr. Michael Roden, scientific director of the DDZ, Corinna Niersmann from the Inflammation research group (Institute of Clinical Diabetology), Kerstin Grieß from the young investigator group Beta Cell Defects (Institute of Beta Cell Biology) with Andreas Fidelak, administrative director of the DDZ.

**Photo 3 (from left to right**): Best wishes for the project. The DDZ scientific director, Prof. Dr. Michael Roden, the winners of the Training and Feasibility Grants (TFG), Dr. Dominik Pesta and Dr. Elisabetta De Filippo (both: Institute of Clinical Diabetology) and Dr. Torben Stermann (Institute of Clinical Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry), with Andreas Fidelak, administrative director of the DDZ.

(January 19, 2018)

The German Diabetes Center (DDZ)  is a German reference center for diabetes. Its objective is to contribute to the improvement of prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes mellitus. At the same time, the research center aims at improving the epidemiological data situation in Germany. The DDZ coordinates the multicenter German Diabetes Study and is a point of contact for all players in the health sector. In addition, it prepares scientific information on diabetes mellitus and makes it available to the public. The DDZ is part of the Leibniz Association (Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, WGL) and is a partner of the German Center for Diabetes Research (DZD e.V.).

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1. Inverse associations between serum levels of secreted frizzled-related protein-5 (SFRP5) and multiple cardiometabolic risk factors: KORA F4 study. Cardiovascular Diabetology, 2017, Volume 16, Number 1, Page 1. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12933-017-0591-x [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Neutralisation of the pro-inflammatory action and detrimental effects of omentin on adipocytes and endothelial function by upregulation of its negative regulator TNFAIP-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Intracellular lipid handling in isolated primary human skeletal muscle cells of sedentary, endurance-trained and type 2 diabetes mellitus donors. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)