

Dissertation on glucose wins first European Alpro Foundation Award for Masters

On the 22 April 2009 Melina Claussnitzer (Munich Technical University) won the first “European Alpro Foundation Award”. The European Alpro Foundation Award is a prestigious distinction for a paper which goes into the effects of plant-based nutrition and the impact on human health. This Award, was presented for the first time by, the Alpro Foundation which aims to stimulate scientific research in Europe with this award.



The winning dissertation

The winning dissertation was selected from five European candidates who had already won the national award. Melina Claussnitzer won the award for her examination of the way in which flavonoids (plant-based bioactive components with antioxidant properties) can affect the take-up of glucose in fat cells.

“Weight problems and obesity are a worldwide health issue and create significant risks of type 2 diabetes and vascular disease. Basic research into the role played by fat cells in the regulation of glucose levels and the impact of nutrition can provide important information that could help us reduce these risks” says Dr De Vriese of the Alpro Foundation.

In her research on fat cells, Melina showed that certain flavonoids in very high concentrations, such as naringenin (from grapefruit), flavone (from grains) and genistein and daidzein (from soya), obstruct glucose uptake in fat cells. This effect could be caused by direct interaction with the glucose transporter GLUT4. A raised GLUT4 function reduces the chances of type 2 diabetes, while a disturbed function increases the chance. In a

normal diet these flavonoids have no impact on glucose uptake. With a normal consumption of daidzein (from soya) there are indications that more glucose is taken up.

The research shows that the glucose transporter GLUT 4 can play an important role in controlling glucose levels in the body and provides a basis for further research.

The European Alpro Foundation Award for Masters: support for young scientific researchers

With the European Alpro Foundation Award for Masters, the Alpro Foundation aims to support and promote scientific knowledge and research into nutrition and health. “Scientific research is the keystone for progress in our society. Thanks to science we can find solutions for modern problems, we can innovate and also look towards the future”, says Professor Delzenne, who chaired the jury. “The fact that the Alpro Foundation keeps track of and rewards the work of young scientists is an extra stimulus for young people to dedicate themselves to nutritional research.”

This is the first time that the prize has been awarded to master students from five European countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom (Ireland included). Melina Claussnitzer’s dissertation was chosen from 43 submissions.

The Alpro Foundation Award has been awarded to bachelor’s students in Belgium since 1996. In 2008 the Alpro Foundation decided that it would also reward master students with exceptional dissertations on plant-based nutrition in the five countries, and one master student in particular with the European Alpro Foundation Award. “From now on we will be awarding the prize each year and hope to draw attention to the importance of sound nutrition for health, and to stimulate knowledge through research”, explains Stephanie De Vriese of the Alpro Foundation.

About the Alpro Foundation

The Alpro Foundation is an independent non-profit organisation which was established in 1996, an Alpro initiative. The aim of the foundation is to support and promote knowledge and scientific research in the field of nutrition and health. Its focus is on plant-based nutrition and soya in particular. The foundation would like to raise awareness about the impact of “nutrition on human health” amongst health experts and the general public. It organises various activities to achieve these objectives, such as conferences, the publication of an educational newsletter and research grants.

For more information about the Alpro Foundation: www.alprofoundation.org

