

Report by the External Advisory Committee (EAC)

The External Advisory Committee of the Institute of Research and Advanced Training in Health Sciences and Technologies (IINFACTS) are very favorably impressed by the continuous progress and achievements of this young R&D Unit. The Unit was created in 2012 as a result of the fusion of two complementary research centers from Cooperativa De Ensino Superior Politecnico e Universitario (CESPU): the CICS (Health Sciences Research Centre) and the CITS (Health Technologies Research Centre), both created in 2007. The IINFACTS R&D Unit is now submitting for the first time to the International panels of the FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia - for evaluation.

The site visits to the IINFACTS facilities (Campus Universitário de Gandra, Paredes) together with the analysis of the scientific reports from 2013 to 2017, confirmed the strong progression of this Unit. In our opinion the researchers of the Unit are performing in accordance with high International standards. In this regard, we highlight the following overall comments:

- IINFACTS is a growing unit with a good level of scientific output in terms of publications in well-read and appreciated refereed journals. At the same time, it contributes to the dissemination of knowledge in culture and society.
- The institutional setting seems strong, with involvement of junior and senior scholars.
- The support from CESPU administration as well as the Unit's management is very good.
- IINFACTS has proven to be a credible partner on the international research scene through its publications of international impact and through external funding from competitive sources.
- Besides research activity, the Unit is actively involved in education both in the undergraduate as well as the graduate level. There is a significant number of master and doctoral students.
- The skills and the composition of the research teams is highly satisfactory and has a good balance of seniors and juniors. The teams are also gender-balanced.

The strategic program developed by the IINFACTS around the four selected research lines (or subgroups) is very adequate and feasible. It fits well with the competences available in the different subgroup and benefits from multidiscipline interactions that supports its research teams, covering fundamental research as well as clinical research.

The EAC acknowledges the adequacy of the model of scientific organization and governance adopted by the IINFACTS, based on only one group, “Therapeutics Research Group”, with four Research subgroups. This organization aims at promoting the collaboration between research subgroups while preserving the necessary autonomy. It allows the emergence of a high critical mass within a multidisciplinary networking environment. This organizational structure should be maintained as it is at the heart of the high level of scientific outcomes of the R&D Unit.

We are very pleased with the inclusion of the research subgroup of “Oral Disease”. There is very limited research in dental sciences worldwide, and notably in southern Europa including Portugal. This is mainly due to the fact that practically all dentist members – both staff and PhD students – dedicate to research only a relatively small part of the time. Efforts to promote dental research should be encouraged. In these regards, we view the “Oral Diseases” subgroup as a challenging contribution of the IINFACTS to this area. This subgroup has enhanced its scientific potential through its interactions with researchers from biochemistry, cell biology and genetics. We also appreciate the enrolment of many dentists in the PhD program in “Biological Sciences Applied to Health” which is mainly supported by the IINFACTS researchers.

In conclusion, we were positively impressed by the range of activities as well as the quality of the work produced by this young Unit. The group has followed previous recommendations in terms of organization and in order to increase the number of publications in high impact journals. This was efficiently achieved. We believe that the Unit will continue to produce high quality research and other activities of regional, national and international impact, providing convincing evidence that it is now an established institution of an International standing, with a consistent and valuable contribution to the National Scientific and Technological System.

Recommendations:

- Participation in EU projects should be stimulated.
- International scholars should be fostered.
- IINFACTS should have an institutional policy to attract postdoctoral researchers. For instance, it should consider applying for specific funds to offer contracts to help bridging the end of the PhD and the start of a post-doc.
- IINFACTS should consider applying for specific funds in order to adapt and expand the research infrastructures to better accommodate the research subgroups and students.

Professor Miguel Viñas Ciordia

Former Chairman Dept. Pathology Medical School, University of Barcelona
Former Vice-chancellor Research University of Barcelona
Former Director of Bellvitge Health Sciences Campus HUB

Professor Elisa Muñoz Torres

Professor of pathology. Medical School University of Salamanca
Former Secretary General of the University of Salamanca

Professor Andrew Smith

Professor of Clinical Bacteriology, University of Glasgow
Director, Scottish Respiratory bacteria Reference laboratory