



# MESI-STRAT

Systems Medicine of Metabolic-Signaling networks -  
A New Concept for Breast Cancer Patient Stratification



## Newsletter No 3 – June 2020

*As you may have noticed, a tiny new virus named SARS-CoV2 has turned our world upside down. Of course, it has also affected MESI-STRAT and we are glad that in times of cancelled conferences and patient days we have electronic ways, like this newsletter, to get in touch with you.*

*In March, all our partner institutions had to close and lab work stopped completely. Recruitment and sampling for our clinical trials had to be interrupted, as additional hospital visits were unadvisable for cancer patients. We did our best to focus on other tasks and continued to work for MESI-STRAT from home. We also had to cancel our Annual Meeting, planned in Innsbruck for the beginning of April. Read all about our substitute virtual meeting below.*

*In addition, Marta Palafox presents herself. She works with Violeta Serra at the Val d'Hebron Institute in Barcelona and continues writing the series about the PostDocs and PhD students working for MESI-STRAT.*

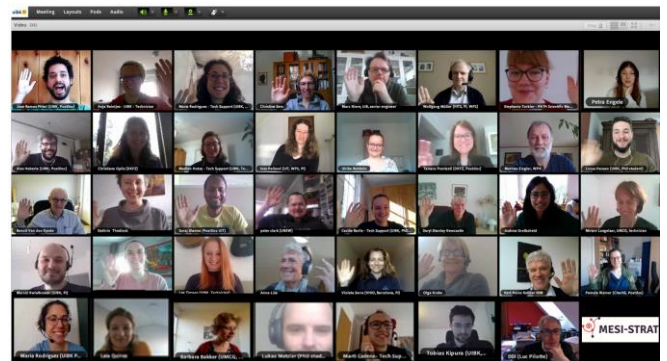
### MESI-STRAT Annual Meeting

All of us were looking forward to our Annual Meeting. Personal meetings increase interaction and exchange and offer a great opportunity especially for PostDocs, PhD students, and technicians to see how their results are used and developed by other partners. Therefore, we were quite unhappy that we had to cancel our on-site event due to the restrictions introduced to stop the COVID-19 outbreak. Health and safety always come first. We tried to make the best out of it and adapted our original program to an online meeting.

Although we are used to video chats, a virtual meeting with almost 50 participants was new for most of us and required several rounds of testing and organization beforehand. It was worth the effort, we had a productive meeting and managed to define our goals and a clear strategy to achieve the deliverables and milestones of the upcoming year. In the end, all participants agreed they enjoyed talking science despite the circumstances. Still we hope that personal meetings will soon be possible again and we will be able to gather on-site in Innsbruck next year.

We would like to thank Dr. Julia Waldschmidt from the University Hospital of Freiburg who joined our meeting as a Clinical Opinion Leader. A big thank you goes to the members of our International Advisory Board: Dr. Anne-Lise Børresen-Dale (Norwegian Radium Hospital in Oslo), Dr. Pernette Verschure (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Gerburg Wulf, MD, PhD (Dana-Farber

Harvard Cancer Center, Boston, USA) and Dr. Andreas Raue (HiFiBio Therapeutics, Cambridge, USA) for their input and advice. Dr. Laia Quirós Pesudo, our project officer from the European Commission, also joined our meeting. We are very grateful for that and want to thank her for her kind help and continuous support, especially in these turbulent times.



39 of 49 participants. Great to see everybody smiling and waving.

### Dr. Marta Palafox, PhD

Postdoctoral Researcher, Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology (VHIO), Barcelona, Spain

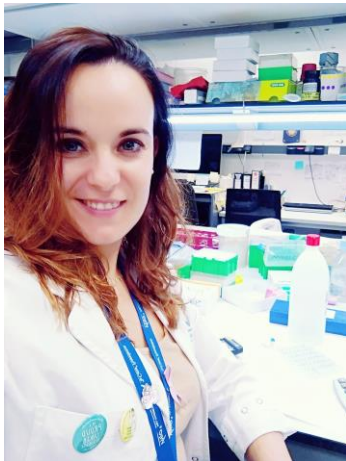
I have loved science since I was a child, but I didn't know it! I clearly remember that my favorite hobby was to mix all things that I found and to see what happened. It was in my last year of high school when I discovered biochemistry. "Wow! It is perfect for me," I thought, because it enabled me to understand the chemistry behind biological



The MESI-STRAT project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 754688.

cal processes occurring in organisms. Thus, I got my Biochemistry degree at the Universidad Autonoma of Madrid in 2008, and my Master degree in Signaling Pathways at Universidad de Alcala in 2009.

The beginning of my scientific career was motivated by my grandmother. She was diagnosed with breast cancer during the last year of my degree. So, I decided to focus my PhD on this disease. For that propose, I moved to Barcelona and got my PhD in Biomedicine at the Universidad of Barcelona in 2014, which was based around the role of RANK/RANKL signaling pathway in breast cancer initiation and progression. Unfortunately, my grandmother died of breast cancer in 2012, but despite the loss, this encouraged me to fight against this horrible disease harder than ever.



*Dr. Marta Palafox, PhD; Postdoctoral Researcher at Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology, Barcelona, Spain*

After my PhD, I joined Dr. Violeta Serra's laboratory at VHIO, where I focus on studying the molecular mechanisms responsible for the resistance to CDK4/6 inhibitors in estrogen receptor-positive breast cancer tumors. Additionally, I have the opportunity to collaborate with the MESI-STRAT consortium where I validate the mechanisms of resistance to different targeted therapies in biological models, which are close to patients. I feel really lucky because this opportunity allows me to do the job that I love

and, at the same time, I can make my little contribution to finding solutions for breast cancer patients.

## MESI-STRAT Questionnaires

In our last newsletter, we presented a questionnaire that has since been distributed both as an online survey and as a paper version. It is directed towards (breast) cancer patients, their relatives, and the general public and wants to find out more about interest in and knowledge about clinical research. A special focus is on questions how information is gathered and whether traditional (newspapers, magazines, patient days) or modern (internet, social media) ways of communication are preferred. We want to use the results to tailor our research and communication activities to the needs of patients.

A special thank you goes to our partner, the patient organization PATH, who distributed the questionnaire and of course, to all the people who made an effort and took the time to answer it. Combined we have managed to get more than 250 answers, 200 from breast cancer patients and 50 from the general public.

We are still analyzing the data and have used the first results to develop an updated version of the questionnaire. It can be answered in both English and German and accessed through links and QR codes below. If you have not yet participated in our survey we would be very happy if you could donate five minutes of your time and answer the questions or distribute the links to your friends and colleagues. We plan to publish first results in our newsletter and at our website at the end of the year.

[Survey English](#)



[Survey German](#)



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