

Alessandria, 01/12/23

## PRESS RELEASE

# A PROJECT ON MICROBIOTA AND ASTHMA WINS THE FIRST ROBERTO RICCOBONI SOLIDAL AWARD

*Presented on 20 November at the Hospital of Alessandria reception room*

“Assessment of alterations in the gut microbiota as a predictive factor for the development of bronchial asthma: feasibility study in a paediatric population of the Alessandria area”. This is the title of the winning project of the first Roberto Riccoboni Solidal Award, created through a partnership between Solidal per la Ricerca and Riccoboni Holding Srl.

Dedicated to the professionals of the Research Laboratories Unit of the Department of Integrated Research and Innovation Activities (DAIRI), directed by Antonio Maconi, the prize of 15,000 euros aims to support healthcare research by rewarding merit, with a particular focus on the ability to study diseases linked to environmental factors, as well as on the groundbreaking contributions of laboratory work, the value and impact generated in response to local healthcare needs, and on the increase in the laboratories' scientific production.

The winning study's Principal Investigator is Valentina Pizzo of the Integrated Sequencing Laboratory, with the collaboration of Alessia Francese, Carlotta Bertolina, Sabrina Sisinni, Andrea Rocchetti, Michela Gandino, Giuseppina Perricone, Enrico Felici, Roberta Di Matteo and Valentina Amore. The aim of the study was to assess alterations in the quality or quantity of the gut microbiota through the collection of swabs in a pre-school and school-age paediatric population with a diagnosis of bronchial asthma, in the care of the paediatric outpatient clinic at Alessandria Hospital.

The samples collected will be analysed using an iSeq sequencing method, which provides a targeted approach to next generation sequencing (NGS), and the data gathered, when compared with the literature, will also form a database for developing future projects on bronchial asthma, a disease linked to environmental risk factors.

Asthma is a major non-communicable chronic disease, affecting around 300 million children and adults, and in literature gut microbiota has been investigated in relation to allergic pathologies. Hence the idea for the winning study.

Presenting the prize is a panel formed of Nicole Riccoboni, of Riccoboni Holding, Alessia Zaio, of the Fondazione Solidal per la Ricerca, Marta Betti, of the DAIRI, Roberto Barbato, of the University of Eastern Piedmont, and Daniele Mandrioli, of the Centro di Ricerca sul Cancro "Cesare Maltoni" - Istituto Ramazzini.



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“We are grateful to the researchers, the professionals, of the integrated laboratory network who worked hard to present eleven highly qualified projects” said Angelo Riccoboni, CEO of Riccoboni Holding, “fully meeting the aims of the Roberto Riccoboni Award, established to promote research into environmental pathologies. The prize also aims to shine a light on research-related activities, encouraging greater understanding within the wider community. The partnership agreement between Solidal and Riccoboni Holding is one of the positive actions which help to build a culture of research in the region, and which support Alessandria Hospital on its path towards recognition as an Institute for Treatment and Research (IRCCS)”.

“We are very pleased with the Award’s success,” added Annalisa Roveta, DAIRI Research Laboratories Unit manager, “especially considering that eleven projects were presented for this first award, demonstrating that research is at the very heart of what we do at the Hospital through DAIRI. Particular thanks therefore go to Riccoboni Holding, who made it possible to create this award, and to all those who were willing to submit their study to the panel, once again demonstrating the strong integration between DAIRI and DISiT, the department at the University of Eastern Piedmont run until just a few weeks ago by Leonardo Marchese, and now headed by Guido Lingua. An integration which is confirmed not only within the Laboratories, but also in the Translational Medicine Unit, headed by Luigi Castello”.

“Fondazione Solidal and Alessandria Hospital,” says Alessia Zaio, director of the Fondazione Solidal per la Ricerca, “have launched a synergic partnership for carrying out research promotion, fundraising, and research support activities, resulting in ‘Solidal per la Ricerca’. The Roberto Riccoboni Solidal Award is the perfect culmination of this process, bringing together two local entities for the advancement of research and, ultimately, the well-being of the patient”.

Competing for the Roberto Riccoboni Solidal Award, therefore, were eleven researchers representing eleven projects, presented in work teams, regarding topics ranging from pollutants and gut microbiota to kidney disease, mesothelioma, the properties of natural substances and hospital flows. The following are the names of the Principal Investigators: Valentina Audrito, Elisa Bona, Paolo Bottino, Alessandro Croce, Franca Gotta, Daniela Lalli, Simona Martinotti, Alfio Marzio Pennisi, Elia Ranzato and Andrea Rocchetti, as well as winner Valentina Pizzo.

At the end of the award, participants and guests attended a charity apéritif at the hospital café, organised in collaboration with Amos, to celebrate the results achieved and continue fundraising for research.