

PRESS RELEASE

## **Turkish Scientist Associate Prof. Duygu Sağ awarded by the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Programme for her Research on Cancer**

PARIS, March 22, 2018 - Yesterday took place in Paris the ceremony of the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme, a yearly event whose objective is to highlight the achievements of younger women from all continents who are in the early stages of their scientific careers. During this ceremony, the **prize of the "International Rising Talent of 2018"** was awarded to **Turkish scientist Associate Prof. Duygu Sağ from the Izmir Biomedicine and Genome Center of Dokuz Eylul University.**

### **Triggering the immune system to fight cancer**

Duygu Sağ's research focus on the role of the immune system to fight cancer. While our immune system defends us against many diseases, it is less effective against cancer. Recent breakthroughs have found ways to increase the immune system's ability to find and eliminate cancer cells, however, one critical immune cell type within the tumour environment, known as "macrophages", has not yet been targeted successfully for immunotherapy. Macrophages can be either anti-inflammatory and promote tumour cell proliferation, or pro-inflammatory and fight the tumour. The tumour environment is usually dominated by tumour-promoting macrophages.

The mechanisms that govern the switch between these two types of macrophage are poorly understood. *"We have recently made the exciting discovery,"* says Prof. Duygu Sağ, *"that macrophages that lack the cholesterol transporter ABCG1 become potent tumour-fighting macrophages and inhibit the progression of bladder cancer in preclinical studies."* Her team is now working to discover the molecular mechanisms that trigger this switch from tumour-promoting to tumour-fighting macrophages. *"This may lead to the development of novel immunotherapeutic approaches for the treatment of cancer,"* she suggests.

### **Prof. Sağ's commitment to science**

Prof. Sağ's commitment to science began in high school: *"While other girls had posters of celebrities on their walls,"* she says, *"I had photos of famous biologists and scientific posters hanging all over my room."* She is hopeful that science can help overcome the unprecedented problems facing the world: *"Our arsenal of scientific knowledge to tackle those problems is now also unprecedented."*

### **Turkey's ambitious objectives for the health sector**

Prof. Sağ's prize reflects Turkey's high ambitions in the health sector. Backed by a double-digit economic growth, Turkey has made significant investments in the health sector during the last years. Several state-of-the-art hospitals recently opened their doors, in partnership with famous universities, attracting more and more patients from Turkey but also from foreign countries. In 2016, 359,000 foreign patients were treated in public, university or private health care facilities in Turkey.

In October 2017, Turkish Minister for Health, Ahmet Demircan, presented the health sector as the *"driving force of the 'new Turkey'"* and signed a common protocol with Ministry for Culture, Numan Kurtulmuş, to promote the country as **medical tourism hub for patients from Europe, Middle East, Africa, Central Asia and Russia.** His ambition is to attract 1,5 million visitors with medical tourism and to make Turkey the second destination for this sector worldwide by 2023.

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**About Turkey Promotion Group (TPG):**

Turkey Promotion Group is founded by the legislation of Turkey Ministry of Economy within the body of Turkish Exporters Assembly (TiM) in 2018. Its vision is to establish and promote “Turkey, Discover the Potential” brand globally. Its mission is to highlight the economic potential of Turkey, introduce Turkey and its sectors and present facts of export of Turkish goods globally.

For more Information; <http://www.turkeydiscoverthepotential.com/>

**About the International Rising Talents programme**

Since 2000, the L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme has highlighted the achievements of younger women who are in the early stages of their scientific careers. Each year, the International Rising Talents programme selects the 15 most promising women scientists among the 275 national and regional fellows of the L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women In Science programme. These young women are the very future of science and recognizing their excellence will help ensure that they reach their full potential.

**For Press Inquiries:**

OPRG for TiM

Amandine Bouvier

+ 33 6 82 71 76 26