2021 Pew Latin American Fellows Program in the Biomedical Sciences

The Pew Charitable Trusts funds 10 postdoctoral fellows for two years.

June 15, 2021

The Pew Charitable Trusts has announced the 2021 class members of the Pew Latin American Fellows Program in the Biomedical Sciences.

Ten postdoctoral fellows from six Latin American countries — Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay — will receive two years of funding to conduct research in laboratories across the United States and will work under the mentorship of prominent biomedical scientists, including members of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences.

“The field of biomedical research is continually faced with new challenges that require multiple perspectives from around the globe,” said Susan K. Urahn, Pew’s president and CEO. “Pew is proud to welcome these promising Latin American fellows to our network of researchers as they explore new solutions and advance scientific knowledge.”

Fellows who choose to return to Latin America to launch their own research labs will receive additional funding from Pew. Approximately 70 percent of participants have pursued this path, contributing to the development of a more robust biomedical research community in Latin America.

Research interests in the 2021 class include how molecular interactions silence the X chromosome, how healthy gut bacteria can promote intestinal immunity, and how molecular and neural circuits guide animals’ seasonal rhythms.

“The 2021 class of fellows joins the Pew network at a critical time, when laboratories face new hurdles in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Eva Nogales, PhD, professor in the department of biochemistry, biophysics, and structural biology at the University of California, Berkeley, and chair of the program’s national advisory committee. “Equipped with diverse insights from each of their respective countries, these promising fellows will help respond to complex global challenges and build a critical foundation for biomedical research across Latin America.”

The 2021 Pew Latin American fellows and their U.S. mentors are:

Luis Boero, PhD
Laboratory of Venkatesh N. Murthy, PhD, 2000 Pew biomedical scholar
Harvard University
Dr. Boero will explore the neural mechanisms that allow mice to make decisions based on smell.

Daiane Boff, PhD
Laboratory of Victor J. Torres, PhD
New York University Grossman School of Medicine
Dr. Boff will explore how toxins produced by the bacterium *Staphylococcus aureus* damage tissues and trigger sepsis, a life-threatening condition.

Emerson Carmona Rojas, PhD
Laboratory of Luis G. Cuello, PhD
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Dr. Carmona Rojas will probe the structure and operation of a channel protein that is overactive in some forms of leukemia.

Andrea Cuentas-Condori, PhD
Laboratory of Daniel Alfonso Colón-Ramos, PhD
Yale University
Dr. Cuentas-Condori will examine how some neurons communicate using two different chemical signals rather than one.

Mariana Duhne Aguayo, PhD
Laboratory of Joshua Berke, PhD
University of California, San Francisco
Dr. Duhne Aguayo will map the neural circuits that calibrate how swiftly animals move.

Guillermo Eastman, PhD
Laboratory of George S. Bloom, PhD
University of Virginia
Dr. Eastman will investigate how the two main toxic molecular species that are hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease damage neurons by selectively altering protein synthesis.

José L. Fachi, PhD
Laboratory of Marco Colonna, MD
Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis
Dr. Fachi will explore how metabolites produced by healthy gut bacteria promote intestinal immunity.

Sergio Hidalgo Sotelo, PhD
Laboratory of Joanna Chiu, PhD
University of California, Davis
Dr. Hidalgo Sotelo will explore the molecular and neural circuits that guide animals' seasonal rhythms.

Carlos Rivera Álvarez, PhD
Laboratory of Jeannie T. Lee, MD, PhD, 1999 Pew biomedical scholar, 2019 Innovation Fund investigator
Massachusetts General Hospital
Dr. Rivera Álvarez will investigate the molecular interactions that govern the silencing of the X chromosome.

Maria Clara Selles, PhD
Laboratory of Moses V. Chao, PhD
New York University Langone Health
Dr. Selles will explore whether the hormone oxytocin can protect neurons from the degeneration that accompanies Alzheimer's disease.

This opinion is by the Pew Charitable Trusts, which is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Learn more at pewtrusts.org.
