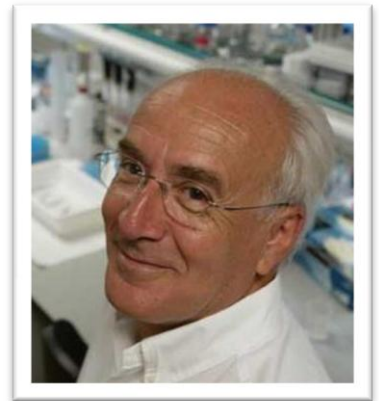




## INTERVIEW with the European Vision Awardee 2011 Prof. Carlos Belmonte

*Universidad Miguel Hernández-Consejo Superior de  
Investigaciones Científicas  
Instituto de Neurociencias de Alicante*



**Question 1:** *What was your first reaction, when you realized that you are the winner of the European Vision Award 2011?*

I felt very pleased and honored. For scientists, the most appreciated recognition is that coming from their own colleagues. Besides, I am a convinced European and feel proud of receiving an award that represents the values of our desire to work and live together.

**Question 2:** *Looking back, what decisions were the important key factors for your own research career?*

Personally, the choice of my research mentor in early days, Professor Antonio Gallego was critical, because he tried to give me a modern view of research and life in a very difficult period of the history of Spain. My years as a NIH postdoctoral fellow in USA were also fundamental to understand and appreciate the rules and values of international research. And finally, the decision of returning to my home country to contribute actively to the development of its research infrastructure, badly needed in the post-civil war Spain, was very important to define what and how I could do in research during the rest of my life.

**Question 3:** *What are your research priorities for the next years and who do you judge the present development in Vision Research?*

My efforts will be directed to extend our knowledge on the functional aspects of the sensory innervations of the eye, in particular about the neural mechanisms underlying ocular discomfort and pain and on the trophic interactions between sensory neurons and their ocular target tissues. The lack of scientific knowledge on the neural basis of ocular sensations is surprising considering the clinical and social importance of its disturbances (dry eye, post-surgical pain, contact lens discomfort).

Eye research has experienced an impressive development in the last decades. I attended first an ARVO meeting in 1973 and we were about 300 people. Today, this figure is over 10,000. In Europe, eye research was defined as an independent field quite recently and has now excellent specific research centers and world-class scientists. I wish for Europe a more defined academic and professional status for scientists working together with clinical ophthalmologists and generosity in our hospitals and public institutions to allow our motivated ophthalmologists to conciliate their clinical work with the development of experimental research.



**Question 4: What is the strategy to promote young promising scientists?**

First, to apply demanding criteria of scientific and intellectual excellence in their selection processes, and to expose them thereafter to a multidisciplinary vision of modern science. It is critical in my view to provide the most capable young researchers during at least 5 years, with the infrastructure and the financial support necessary for the development of their own ideas and projects, preventing the loss of energies and time involved in the continuous search of working opportunities. We need a new generation of first-class young eye scientists in Europe that works intensively, without interferences and uncertainties about their future.

**Question 5: Dear Prof. Belmonte, the fairy godmother gives you three wishes for free. Would you tell us these three wishes?**

At my age I do not believe in fairy godmothers and wishful thinking but rather in defining realistic goals and in working very hard to obtain them!. That said, I wish that the gradual acceptance of scientific values as common base for the relations between humans helps us to develop a more rational and peaceful global human society. I would also like personally to witness as long as possible the impressive advances that our scientific knowledge is providing every day and, finally I wish a happy and successful life to all my colleagues and friends in the eye research community, in particular to those that were so kind to select me for this wonderful award.

THANK YOU FOR THE INTERVIEW

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