ArrasatELA brings together over 120 international researchers to foster new avenues of collaboration in the fight against ALS

The 2nd ALS-ArrasatELA scientific symposium, organized by DalecandELA, featured three days of scientific exchange, the sharing of research, and meetings among specialists from various countries. The event also included particularly moving moments, such as the first meeting between individuals affected by the ARPP21 mutation—hailing from La Rioja—and the researchers who identified this genetic variant and are currently studying it.

ARRASATE-MONDRAGÓN, NOVEMBER 1, 2026. More than 120 researchers from around the world gathered in Arrasate-Mondragón from October 28 to 30 to participate in the second edition of ALS-ArrasatELA, an international scientific symposium on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and neurodegeneration, organized by DalecandELA.

Over the course of three intensive days, leading international researchers shared their work, findings, breakthroughs, and the challenges they face in the study of ALS. Beyond the scientific presentations, the participants had the opportunity to interact, exchange knowledge, compare research, and forge new connections—all with the goal of opening up collaborative pathways to accelerate scientific progress against the disease.

The symposium once again highlighted the importance of sharing not only findings and breakthroughs but also unresolved questions and research paths that did not yield the expected results. Learning about the errors and setbacks encountered by other teams helps to avoid redundant efforts, optimize resources, and make faster progress. In the face of a disease like ALS, every step counts, and international collaboration is essential.

Science and affected families, face to face

One of the most special and moving moments of this edition was the meeting between individuals affected by ALS who carry a mutation in the ARPP21 gene—hailing from La Rioja—and the researchers who identified this genetic variant and are currently studying it.

For the first time, families living with this form of the disease have had the chance to meet in person the scientists who are investigating its origin and mechanisms. The meeting included Dr. Álvaro Carbayo Viejo —a member of the team at the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau in Barcelona that identified this mutation—and Dr. Afra Aabdien, from King's College London, whose research focuses specifically on the ARPP21 gene.

It was an opportunity to bridge two worlds that often follow separate paths: scientific research and the lived experience of those affected by the disease. The encounter was deeply moving; it put a human face on the research, reminding the scientists of the human impact of their work, while reinforcing for the families the importance of continuing to advance knowledge about this variant—which is linked to a particularly aggressive form of ALS and is notably prevalent in La Rioja Baja, Navarre, and other parts of northern Spain.

‘Death Valley’: Bringing the challenges of research to the public

The first day of the symposium also featured an event open to the general public: a screening of the documentary *Death Valley* at Kulturate, attended by some of the individuals featured in the film.

The documentary offered the audience insight into one of the greatest challenges in biomedical research: the long, complex journey between a scientific discovery in the laboratory and its potential application as a treatment. Following the screening, attendees, researchers, and the film’s subjects engaged in a discussion that further fostered a connection between the scientific community and society at large.

DalecandELA: Committed to research

With this second edition, ALS-ArrasatELA reaffirms its international outlook and its dedication to creating a space for collaboration among researchers specializing in ALS and neurodegeneration.

The symposium is supported scientifically by Dr. Jone López Eráuskin—a researcher at the University of California, San Diego, who hails from Arrasate—and Dr. Ana Rita Quadros, from the University of Coimbra. For DalecandELA, promoting initiatives like this is part of its commitment to research—driven by the conviction that raising awareness of ALS, supporting families, and helping to accelerate the search for treatments are inseparable goals.

With over 120 researchers, three days of work, and new connections that could lead to future collaborations, the second edition of ArrasatELA concludes with a clear message: **the fight against ALS requires not only more research, but also greater cooperation, increased knowledge sharing, and a stronger bond between those conducting the research and those awaiting its results.**

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