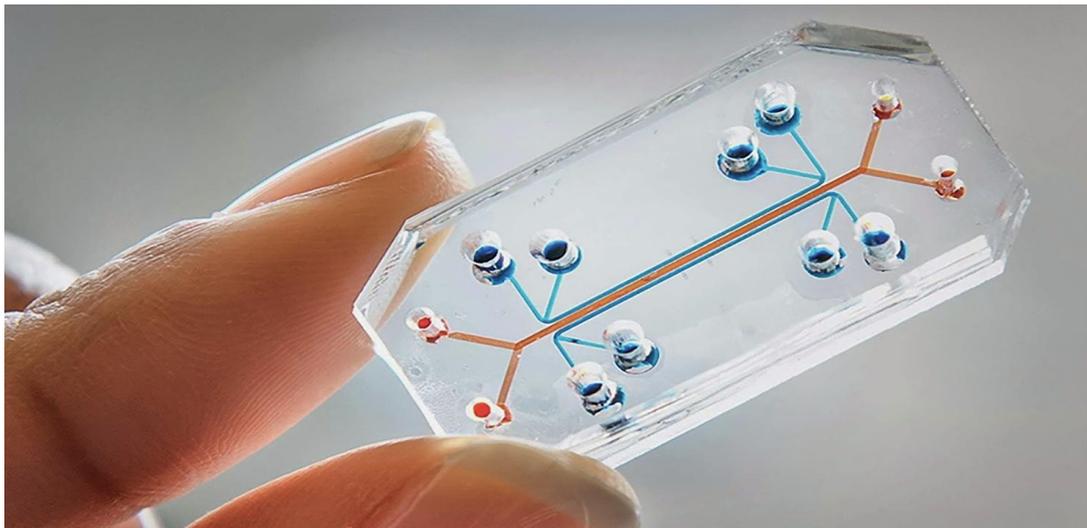


## PRESS RELEASE

*Paris, February 2, 2023*

**Descroix-Vernier EthicScience Prize:  
€110,000 for non-animal research,  
a first in France**

On February 2, 2023, the Pro Anima Scientific Committee and the Descroix-Vernier Foundation recognized three teams of researchers during a ceremony at Cercle de l'Union Interalliée.



### A unique prize in France

Scientific progress is aligned with non-animal research. The Pro Anima Scientific Committee, which previously had Théodore Monod as its Honorary President, has been supporting this position for more than 30 years. **The observation made by Christiane Laupie-Koechlin, its founder, is beyond any doubt:**



*With nine of every 10 molecules tested on animals failing when they transition to humans\*, it is now more relevant than ever to highlight alternative methods that are safer for humans and free from animal suffering.*



For this, in 2013, she launched the fund and the EthicScience prize, which is awarded every two years to a research program that is based on using and/or developing non-animal methods. She has been joined, on several occasions, in this fight by the philanthropist Jean-Baptiste Descroix-Vernier. Since 2005 and the creation of his foundation, the former head of Dalenys has supported a number of charitable causes, including Pro Anima.

This year, the two organizations are further strengthening their collaboration in order to promote the cause championed by Pro Anima even more widely. The EthicScience Prize, renamed as the Descroix-Vernier EthicScience Prize, recognizes three teams of researchers and awards them €110,000. This is the first time, in France, that such an amount has been awarded by a private fund to support non-animal research.



*We tend to forget this, but researchers are lifesavers. Thanks to them, every day, thousands of lives are saved around the world. The men and women who have been recognized, this evening, are saving both human and animal lives. They are contributing to scientific progress and raising ethical standards. Their work deserves to be both encouraged and promoted.*



**Jean-Baptiste Descroix-Vernier.**

## Three remarkable programs, one shared fight



After reviewing all of the applications, the selection committee identified three programs to receive this prize. Chaired by professor **Jean-François Narbonne**, a doctor in toxicology and nutrition and world-renowned toxicologist, this committee is made up of eight specialists from the fields of research and medicine.

### These programs are aligned with the prize's three categories:

- **Innovation** (technology transfer and new concepts),
- **Development and Applicability** (research with a practical focus), and
- **Jury's Prize** (encouragements from the selection committee).  
They all share a core focus on providing an impactful response in the fight against cancer, without requiring any animal testing.

**Doctor Agathe Figarol** won the Descroix-Vernier EthicScience Prize in the Innovation category. She and her team are working on a tumor-on-chip\*\* project to fight glioblastoma multiforme, the most common and most aggressive brain tumor. 3D Glimpse, their proposed model, is closer to humans than an animal model could ever be. It will make it possible to better understand and treat brain cancer.

**Doctor Julien Marie and Sophie Léon** won the Descroix-Vernier EthicScience Prize in the Development and Applicability category. Their innovative method makes it possible to maintain, outside a patient's body, the biological integrity of tumors and cellular interactions within the tissue. Already validated and published for three types of cancer (breast, lung, melanoma), this ex-vivo technology will soon be adapted for other cancers, including those with bad prognoses (pancreas), as well as pediatric forms, with a view to accelerating its rollout for new therapeutic actions.

**Doctor Nicolas Aznar** won the Descroix-Vernier EthicScience Prize in the Jury's Prize category. With the NEXPOCAN project, Nicolas Aznar and his team want to offer the possibility to generate organoid cultures\*\*\* derived from patients with a standardized and more reliable approach. The aim is to improve the success rate with the development of anti-tumor drugs, paving the way for animal-free preclinical trials, in addition to developing personalized medicine to offer more effective treatment for patients.

The next Descroix-Vernier EthicScience Prizes will be awarded in February 2025, with applications to open at the start of 2024.

\* A. Akhtar, *The Flaws and Human Harms of Animal Experimentation*, Camb Q Healthc Ethics. 2015

\*\* *Organs-on-chips* (OoCs) and *body-on-chips* (BoCs) are chips that make it possible to reproduce several parts of the human body (tissues and organs) on a microscopic scale and to model human physiology and pathologies. Harvard Wyss Institute

\*\*\*Organoids are three-dimensional cellular structures that mimic the architecture and functioning of a whole organ. [INRAE](#)



#### About the PRO ANIMA Scientific Committee

[www.proanima.fr](http://www.proanima.fr)

Created in 1989 by Christiane Laupie-Koechlin, with Professor Théodore Monod as Honorary President, and currently chaired by Dr Serge Kauffer, the Pro Anima Scientific Committee (1908 law association) works to promote alternative methods to animal testing. The Pro Anima Committee is not only a whistleblower, after sharing information very early on concerning the shortcomings of the animal model, but also a pioneer in France, working to encourage other more ethical, more reliable and cruelty-free forms of research. This unique Committee works to share information and build awareness, particularly with policymakers in France and Europe, and brings the world of research and the general public together. Pro Anima also publishes the quarterly magazine *Sciences, Enjeux, Santé* with updates on the latest developments and advances with non-animal research.

A member of the ECEAE (European Coalition to End Animal Experiments), ARET (French association for toxicology research), and an external stakeholder in the French

PARC network (Partnerships for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals), the association works with partner laboratories and researchers and is supported by leading French, Belgian and Swiss animal protection NGOs.



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### **About the Descroix-Vernier Foundation**

[www.fondationdescroixvernier.com](http://www.fondationdescroixvernier.com)

#### *A Foundation for life.*

The Descroix-Vernier Foundation's mission is clear: saving lives, as many lives as possible. With this goal, it helps the weakest and most threatened in priority. The Descroix-Vernier Foundation's mission is focused on three areas for action: humans, animals and nature. All the projects supported or funded by the Descroix-Vernier Foundation, for nearly 20 years, are selected based on a certain number of criteria and followed in the field. Since it was launched in 2002, the DV Foundation has notably made it possible to bring drinking water to hundreds of thousands of people in sub-Saharan Africa, to create a number of homeless shelters in France and to distribute basic necessities. In terms of animals, the Descroix-Vernier Foundation's initiatives include helping several dozen shelters in France, funding programs to safeguard threatened species and providing veterinary care. Lastly, it also takes action to protect wild natural spaces. The Descroix-Vernier Foundation is funded exclusively by its founders, the Descroix-Vernier couple, who have chosen to share their entire fortune.

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