

## **Meet Maria-Christina Zennaro, our 2026 European Hormone Medallist**



**Professor Maria-Christina Zennaro, from Paris, France, is our 2026 European Hormone Medallist. She will deliver her Award Lecture in Prague at ECE 2026. Read on to learn more about her career in endocrinology, her advice for future endocrinologists, and what you can look forward to hearing her talk about at the Congress.**

### **Please tell us about your current role**

I am a Research Professor at the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (Inserm) and Director of the GEMMAH team (GEnetic MechanisMs of Aldosterone-related disorders – towards precision medicine in Hypertension) at the Paris Cardiovascular Research Center (Inserm, Université Paris Cité). I am also an Associated Investigator at the Genetics Department of the European Hospital Georges Pompidou in Paris, France.

### **How were you inspired to work in endocrinology?**

I am a clinical endocrinologist with a PhD, and have always been inspired to do research on complex mechanisms responsible for human disease. I encountered adrenal research very early in my medical studies, while I was doing an internship, and have never stopped working on aldosterone since.

### **What will you discuss in your Medal Lecture at ECE 2026?**

I will cover research that I have performed over the last 15 years, on the genetics and molecular mechanisms underlying endocrine hypertension and aldosterone-related disorders. I will describe our multidisciplinary research strategy, which integrates genetics, genomics and experimental models to identify pathogenic mechanisms and potentially actionable pathways involved in aldosterone dysregulation and hypertension.

In particular, I will present the identification of germline and somatic mutations in primary aldosteronism, and the discovery of a shared genetic susceptibility between primary aldosteronism and hypertension, which redefines our understanding of aldosterone dysregulation in the general population and its impact on high blood pressure.

I will also discuss strategies to bridge basic science and clinical translation, taking as an example the results of two multipartner European projects that I am co-ordinating. These aim to develop new omics-derived biomarkers for improved diagnosis of endocrine hypertension and biomarker-guided personalised decision support to improve treatment efficacy.

### **What are you most proud of in your career, and in life in general?**

This is an extremely difficult question! With regard to my career, I am proud of having been able to build a strong research group of highly skilled young and senior scientists, with whom I have contributed to advancing science in the field of aldosterone and endocrine hypertension. I am also proud of the collaboration and collective achievements generated through the European projects ENS@T HT and HT Advance, where co-ordinated efforts across multiple partners have produced substantial progress in the field.

### **What is likely to be the next breakthrough in your area of interest?**

I expect that new models, in particular induced pluripotent stem cell-derived organoids, will allow improved modelling of human disease, with discovery of new targets and offering new opportunities for drug discovery.

**What is the biggest challenge in your field right now?**

This is limited research funding. The EndoCompass Project, led by ESE and the European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology (ESPE), is a major initiative to shape priorities in endocrine science, and I hope the resulting indications will be adopted by national governments and by the EU, leading to an increase in research funding.

**What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?**

I most enjoy scientific exchanges with colleagues, the moments when a new idea or new understanding emerges, the constant learning and the interactions with students and trainees.

**What are you most looking forward to at ECE 2026?**

I will enjoy engaging with high-level scientific work, discovering new findings, and the opportunity to deepen professional interactions with colleagues.

**Why should people join ESE?**

ESE has become the leading platform for European endocrinology. It enables interaction at all levels among scientists and clinicians working in the field, offering exceptional mentorship opportunities for early-career colleagues, in close collaboration with national societies. ESE is also one of the major reference bodies for the development of clinical guidelines that are followed worldwide.

**What words of wisdom do you have for aspiring endocrinologists?**

Cultivate curiosity – the most meaningful scientific advances often begin with a moment of insight, an unexpected observation, a new idea, or a shift in understanding. And value mentorship – strong mentorship shapes careers and strengthens the community. Take advantage of opportunities offered through professional societies and, in time, offer the same support to others.