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## PRESS RELEASE

### **A team from Piedmont to revolutionize diagnostic methods for liver pathologies**

Subject: assignment of the Piedmont region grant, third round of European program financing POR FESR 2014-2020 – INNOVATION HUBS



ABICH ([www.abich.it](http://www.abich.it)) biotechnological research and analysis laboratories in Verbania were approved by Finpiemonte on October 11th for the EPATOCARE project, as part of the “Innovation hubs and strategic research companies 2016” program by the Piedmont Regional Administration.

The reference focus is the LIFE SCIENCES one, led by the BioPmed, which is managed by the Bioindustry Park in Colletterto Giacosa – Ivrea, an innovation cluster that connects and supports companies and institutes that are active in human health and life sciences research.

The objective of the EPATOCARE project is identifying **early markers of hepatic fibrosis**.

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Cholestasis related pathology are one of the main causes of fibrosis and cirrhosis in patients with acute or chronic hepatic damage. These pathologies can be caused by genetic flaws, mechanical aberrations, toxins or by immune system malfunctions that damage the biliary ducts causing bile stagnation and hepatic tissue damage.

Such pathologies display common clinical symptoms such as cholestasis, inflammation and hepatic fibrosis. Damage affecting the biliary ducts and epithelia can lead to terminal empathic pathologies that lead to organ transplant or death. Hepatic cirrhosis is the 12<sup>th</sup> most common cause of death in the world, and its occurrence is constantly growing (+45% between 1990 and 2013). The diagnosis of this pathology is often difficult, and almost impossible in its early stages. Hepatic biopsy is considered a standard procedure to evaluate the histological conditions of the liver, but it is undeniable that reliable diagnostic markers need to be identified through non-invasive methods as well. The researchers in Verbania, together with the Center for Molecular Biotechnology of the Turin University (Prof. Fiorella Altruda, <https://www.mbc.unito.it/it>) will study extracellular micro-vesicles (EVs) generated by the liver and retrievable from the blood flow, a possible source of diagnostic markers, investigating them in an experimental model and later validating them in a clinical settings, through advanced chemical and molecular biology techniques.

“The approval of the project was a source of great satisfaction for us” stated Elena Bocchietto, ABICH’s scientific director “as it rewards our constant commitment for research and to connect with the leading companies and institutes in this sector. This project will motivate us to continue along our innovation path, and the financing will allow us to bolster our Research & Development Division in Verbania during 2018.”

The project to develop a new diagnostic technique that will allow the early diagnosis of hepatic fibrosis will therefore take place in Verbania. The new technique will potentially have a huge positive impact on health, with international cascade effects on the Healthcare industry. The ABICH team will present the project and its expectations at MEDICA, the international diagnostic-biomedical industry congress that will be held in Dusseldorf between November 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

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