

The UPR Institute of Neurobiology to Be Repaired

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FEMA's \$6.2 million will support scientific research on the island

Guaynabo, Puerto Rico –When the Institute of Neurobiology (INB) was founded in the late 1960's, the study of this science was beginning on the island. Today, INB has 11 laboratories that do research on the human brain, its functions and its behavior as part of the nervous system.

By studying the structure of the nervous system and how it works, the INB looks for ways to prevent and treat different conditions that affect people. This includes studies on addiction, the impact of the variables on the environment and their effect on the nervous system, as well as the development of treatments.

The three-story INB historic building located in the heart of Old San Juan attracts renowned researchers such as Dr. Guillermo A. Yudowski. Yudowski's research, who has participated in studies in Sweden, Israel and the state of Massachusetts, seeks to understand neuropsychiatric disorders and why they develop.

Following an allocation of \$6.2 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the organization will be able to restore its facilities to continue developing research projects –that inform residents about the causes of certain mental health or neurologic conditions– as well as clinical treatments that support a better quality of life.

Dr. Ilka C. Ríos Reyes, Dean of the Medical Sciences Campus, stated “we're very pleased with this allocation of funds from FEMA to mitigate the considerable damage suffered at the INB building as a result of Hurricane María. These economic resources are of vital importance for the continuation of the scientific work being carried out at this important research center. It is also important for the completion of ongoing projects, the implementation of others and, above all, for the strengthening of infrastructure and resistance to future high-impact atmospheric phenomena”.



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Another aspect of the INB is that it provides the means to sustain and develop research projects while it serves to educate and train the new generation of Puerto Rican scientists. Dr. María A. Sosa Lloréns belongs to a group of about 30 researchers from the Medical Sciences Campus that are in charge of generating new knowledge that results in advances for the biomedical sciences.

Likewise, the Institute contributes to the island's public health through its research findings. In addition to working on studies on the neurological bases of addiction to alcohol and other drugs, the Institute's findings are applied in the development of clinical treatments for mental health or neurological conditions. According to Sosa Lloréns, nearly 17 percent of adults have some form of dependency or addiction. Learning about the cells that are affected with an addiction clears the way for the development of medicines to help regulate that addiction and prevent the dangerous behaviors that they cause.

The facilities employ about 50 people, including researchers, laboratory technicians, animal health technicians, as well as administrative and maintenance staff. During the past five years, about nine postdoctoral students, 15 graduate students and an annual average of 35 undergraduate students have been trained at the Institute. Also, during this period, the Institute of Neurobiology has been active in around 15 research projects involving the collaboration of local and international neuroscientists.

The funds allocated by FEMA to the institute will be used to restore the facilities and that they're ready to function as they did prior to Hurricane María. The work includes the removal and replacement of doors, electrical and lighting systems, fans, the electrical substation and generator, air conditioners, exhaust fans, among other work.

Likewise, the project includes about \$305,000 in hazard mitigation funds to prevent similar damage in the event of future atmospheric events: bars for air conditioners, reinforced doors and windows to prevent leaks, and surge protectors to protect electrical equipment from future outages.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, please visit fema.gov/es/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow our social media pages at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).

