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## **Maria-Grazia Roncarolo, MD Named FOCIS President**

**Menomonee Falls, Wis.** – The Federation of Clinical Immunological Societies (FOCIS) announced on Thursday the appointment of Maria-Grazia Roncarolo, MD as president of the organization, for a two-year term concluding at the 2020 FOCIS Annual Meeting in San Francisco.

An internationally recognized scientist, Dr. Roncarolo discovered T regulatory type 1 cells, investigated the role of these cells in chronic inflammatory and autoimmune diseases and completed the first clinical trial using T regulatory type 1 cells to prevent severe graft-versus-host disease. She researched the molecular and cellular mechanisms in genetic diseases of the immune system and she led successful stem cell and gene therapy clinical trials in primary immunodeficiency patients.

“The core objective of FOCIS is to bring scientists and physicians together to translate new scientific knowledge into multiple clinical fields,” said Dr. Roncarolo. “It will be my role to work with the FOCIS community to encourage broad and effective evolution of this concept throughout the scientific and medical community.”

Dr. Roncarolo is particularly interested in expanding FOCIS’ role in encouraging young scientists to focus on the human aspect of immunology and to pursue careers in translational immunology.

“FOCIS has long been a leader in immunology education and in training future generations of immunologists,” said Roncarolo. “A key priority in my presidency is to build on these efforts to engage and motivate the next generation of physician scientists to applying their discoveries to the development of clinical trials and studies in humans.”

During her tenure as president, Dr. Roncarolo will strive to increase FOCIS’ visibility in the immunology community by collecting and sharing the best science from the translational immunology community, showcasing highlights of the FOCIS Annual Meeting in *Science Immunology* and other leading journals, and enhancing FOCIS’ online education program.

Dr. Roncarolo succeeds Jeff Bluestone, PhD, who serves as the A.W. and Mary Margaret Clausen Distinguished Professor of Metabolism and Endocrinology and Director of the Hormone Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Bluestone also is president and CEO of the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy.

### **About Dr. Roncarolo**

Dr. Roncarolo, a pediatric immunologist by training, is the co-director of the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, the George D. Smith Professor in Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, Professor of Pediatrics and of Medicine, chief of the Division of Pediatric Stem Cell Transplantation and Regenerative Medicine, and co-director of the Bass Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Diseases at Stanford University.

In her role, Dr. Roncarolo leads efforts to translate scientific discoveries in genetic diseases and regenerative medicine into novel patient therapies, including treatments based on stem cells and gene therapy.

Dr. Roncarolo earned her medical degree at the University of Turin in Italy and spent her early career in Lyon, France, where she focused on severe inherited metabolic and immune diseases, including severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), better known as the “bubble boy disease.” Dr. Roncarolo was a key member of the team that carried out the first stem cell transplants given before birth to treat these genetic diseases.

Dr. Roncarolo also worked for several years at DNAX Research Institute for Molecular and Cellular Biology in Palo Alto, where she contributed to the discovery of novel cytokines, cell-signaling molecules that are part of the immune response. She studied the role of cytokines in inducing immunological tolerance and in promoting stem cell growth and differentiation.

Dr. Roncarolo developed new gene-therapy approaches, which she pursued as director of the Telethon Institute for Cell and Gene Therapy at the San Raffaele Scientific Institute in Milan. Under her direction, the San Raffaele Scientific Institute has been seminal in showing the efficacy of gene therapy for otherwise untreatable inherited diseases of the blood and immune system, including Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID). Her team developed the first stem cell gene therapy for ADA-SCID to receive regulatory approval with the name of Strimvelis.

### **About FOCIS**

FOCIS exists to improve human health through immunology by fostering interdisciplinary approaches to both understand and treat immune-based diseases. Initially established as a cross-disciplinary meeting, FOCIS held its first Annual Meeting in 2003 and incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization in 2003 after two successful meetings.

FOCIS is a key forum where opinion leaders come together to chart the path to the next major breakthrough in disease therapy, and is composed of 58 Member Societies representing roughly 65,000 clinician scientists.