NAR-ZMBH Symposium on “Molecular Aging Research”

The Center for Molecular Biology of Heidelberg University (ZMBH) and the Network Aging Research (NAR) hosted a symposium on molecular aging research on November 19, bringing together around 60 participants at Heidelberg University's Bergheim Campus.

The symposium opened with welcoming remarks by Prof. Elmar Schiebel (Director of the ZMBH), Prof. Cornelia Wrzus (Geschäftsführende Direktorin, NAR), and Prof. Konrad Beyreuther, a ZMBH alumnus and founder of the NAR, whose discoveries have significantly shaped Alzheimer’s research.

Research into the molecular and cellular mechanisms of aging is crucial for better understanding age-related diseases and developing new approaches to prevention and treatment.

Seven talks addressed current developments in molecular aging research. Prof. Janine Kirstein from the Leibniz Institute on Aging in Jena opened the series of talks, followed by presentations from two speakers from the DKFZ and four ZMBH research group leaders. Among them was Prof. Nora Vögtle, ZMBH research group leader and NAR member, whose group investigates the role of mitochondria—the cell’s powerhouses—in the molecular aging process.

The topics ranged from mechanisms that make certain neurons susceptible to age-related changes and harmful protein deposits to gene regulation, the maintenance of cellular health, and the breakdown of protein deposits associated with neurodegenerative diseases. Another presentation addressed epigenetic markers such as DNA methylation, whose patterns can be influenced by environmental factors and used to estimate epigenetic age. The development of non-invasive epigenetic tests for individual disease risk assessment was also discussed.

During the coffee break and subsequent get-together, the participants, among them many young researchers from Heidelberg, took the opportunity to discuss current developments in the field, make new contacts, and exchange ideas.

We thank all organizers, participants, and speakers for their contributions and the engaging discussions.

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