

Paola Cavalcante is a post-doctoral researcher investigator at the Foundation IRCCS Neurological Institute Carlo Besta in Milan, where she works since 2006. In October 2002 she obtained the Master degree cum laude in Biological Sciences at the University of Calabria, where in January 2006 she got the PhD degree in Molecular Bio-pathology. During her PhD appointment, she was involved in genetic studies focused on the identification of genetic risk factors affecting longevity and age-related complex diseases. Results of her investigation as PhD student were published on international peer-reviewed journals. In May 2006 P. Cavalcante joined the Neurology IV - Neuroimmunology and Neuromuscular Diseases Unit of the Foundation IRCCS Neurological Institute Carlo Besta, where she has always been actively involved in research projects aimed at investigating the molecular mechanisms underlying the immunopathogenesis of myasthenia gravis (MG). Her research was mainly focused on the pathogenic link between innate immunity and autoimmunity in MG, and she obtained interesting results on the contribution of viral infections and Toll-like receptors (TLRs) to the intra-thymic pathogenesis of the disease. In particular, findings reported in her articles, which were the first to describe the possible contribution of Epstein-Barr virus infection to MG, significantly enhanced our knowledge on the disease, promising to have relevant therapeutic implications in the future. She is author of more than 20 manuscripts on this topic and related subjects, including research articles and reviews. During the recent 11th International Congress on Autoimmunity (Lisbon, May 2018), she was awarded for outstanding contribution to the field of autoimmunity as young researcher. Currently, she is Principal Investigator of a three-year project funded by the Italian Ministry of Health, aimed at exploring the role of miRNAome in MG. Her recent unpublished data demonstrate a contribution of miRNAs in modulating innate immune response in MG patients. Greater understanding in this area could have a profound impact in the field of MG and other B cell-mediated autoimmune diseases, towards the future development of innovative therapies.