BIOMEDICINE TRAVEL GRANT

MEETING REPORT

Valeria Masciovecchio, Ph.D Candidate,

Cardioimmunology Congress, La Granja de San Ildefonso, Spain, 2026

This September I was able to attend the III. Cardioimmunology Congress in La Granja de San Ildefonso, Spain (September 30 – October 2, 2026), thanks to the BioMed Program travel grant. The congress brought together leading scientists and clinicians working where immunology and cardiovascular disease meet. It focused on communication between organs and between cells, the link between metabolism and inflammation, and translational immunomodulatory strategies. Over three days, the program combined whole-day lectures from leading experts in the field with poster sessions during the breaks, where we stood at our posters and could interact with everyone, ask questions, and discuss our work.

A highlight for me was that I could present my doctoral work in this setting. I presented a poster titled "Immune cell remodeling in pulmonary hypertension associated with HFpEF." My research investigates how immune cells, particularly myeloid cells, contribute to pulmonary vascular remodeling in cardiometabolic HFpEF. Presenting to such a specialised audience gave me the chance to be challenged by experts, and the discussions gave me many new ideas to incorporate into the project.

Further highlights included very interesting lectures. Prof. Gabriele Schiattarella spoke on lipotoxicity in cardiometabolic disease and HFpEF and its emerging links to inflammatory pathways, which is directly relevant to the model I work with. Prof. Slava Epelman presented on the origin and function of resident cardiac macrophages. The symposium on interorgan crosstalk in heart inflammation was especially valuable to me, because it reflected the heart–lung axis that is central to my project.

Another great aspect of the congress was its size and format. Because everyone stayed together for the whole three days in La Granja, it was easy to meet many people, from other PhD students and postdocs to senior group leaders. The shared dinners in the evenings were especially good for making further connections in a relaxed setting, and they often continued the discussions that had started at the posters. I spoke with researchers working on macrophage biology, immunometabolism, and T cells in cardiac disease. These conversations broadened how I think about my own data and opened up possibilities for future exchange and collaboration.

Getting to La Granja was quite a journey in itself. From Zurich we flew to Madrid, then took a train to Madrid's central station, a second train to Segovia, and finally a bus up to La Granja. It was a long trip, but it was worth it: without the congress I would probably never have visited this part of Spain. Segovia is a charming small city with remarkable cultural heritage, most famously its Roman aqueduct, and La Granja itself, with the royal palace and gardens, was a beautiful setting for the meeting.

I am sincerely thankful to the BioMed Program for making this trip possible. Attending this congress gave me many good ideas and inspiration for my scientific thinking, and more confidence in presenting my work to experts in the field. The ideas and connections I brought back from La Granja will continue to shape my project going forward.



Left: La Granja Royal Palace. Right: My colleague and me at the venue.



Left: Me standing with my poster in a small corridor with so many other posters. Right: Segovia.