Medical Research Institute of the Hospital La Fe
IIS La Fe
Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
HRS4R
Gap Analysis and Action Plan

Document to be submitted to the European Commission for review

Introduction

The MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE HOSPITAL LA FE (IIS La Fe, www.iislafe.es) is a non-profit organisation that carries out the scientific and research policy of the "La Fe" Health Department. The research of excellence carried out at the IIS La Fe is patient-oriented and was accredited as a "Health Research Institute" by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation in 2009.

The European Commission has elaborate the Human Resource Researchers Strategy (HRS4R) http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher as a tool to implementation of recommendations relating to the rights and responsibilities of researchers and their employers and/or funders listed in the "The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (C&C)" (http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf).

The IIS La Fe wants to offer an attractive and competitive research environment to national and international professional in the health sector. For this purpose, its main goal is that researchers can conduct their activity in the best working conditions and opportunities for growth. In order to achieve this, it has been working in the set up and development of departments and services that usefully help to the researchers in their day-to-day activity.

The IIS La Fe expresses their interest in the framework of the HRS4R strategy as a mechanism to self-assessment of the utility of the current departments/services. The IIS La Fe is committed to align its Human Resources policies and practices with European C&C recommendations, in order to standardise best practices in terms of recruitment and employment conditions. The present document explains the internal Gap Analysis of IIS La Fe and the Action Plan develop in order to increase the attractiveness of the IIS La Fe for researchers, creating the most as possible favourable conditions for developing his scientific career.

Methodology

The working plan has follow the 5 stages of the HRS4R strategy proposed by the European Commission:

1. Gap Analysis; internal analysis of current practice comparing the institutional policy with the recommendations listed in the C&C, involving the institution as the main key player.
2. Action Plan: propose initiatives for attaining identified objectives (what, who and when) and publication of the main results of this analysis on the institution's website.
3. Request for acknowledgment of the strategy by the European Commission.
4. Implementation of the HR strategy within the institution via its own internal quality assurance procedures, with self-assessment after two years.
5. External evaluation of the achievement of the proposed initiatives after four years.

The **HRS4R Working Group**, which participated in the elaboration of the Gap Analysis, Action Plan and the present document is listed below;

- Sabrina Femenia (Management)
- Mayte Cortell (HR Department)
- Carlos Miñana (Legal Department)
- Rosario Pellejero (Quality Department)
- Ana Blanco (International Office)
- Ainhoa Genovés (Scientific Area & International Office)

The **HRS4R Working Group** has developed an internal analysis using the template proposed by HRS4R Strategy (Gap Analysis) that has led to the planning of actions to take (Action Plan).

During the working process the group has discussed the following items:

- Outcomes of the HRS4R Gap Analysis at IIS La Fe (strengths and weaknesses of current status)
- Internal analysis of current initiatives and services of the IIS La Fe
- Initiatives to be undertaken (Action Plan)

Outcomes of the HRS4R Gap Analysis at IIS LA FE

The Gap Analysis detailed results are in **Annex I** (Gap Analysis), furthermore, it has be done a short discussion of the principal outcomes identify after carrying out the analysis.

Existing practice at IIS La Fe; it has been found that the IIS La Fe current practices complaint with most of the key principles of the C&C code. Some examples include:

- ✓ IIS La Fe provides to researchers **working conditions and information** necessary to ensure the development of their research activity with freedom and responsibility. Most of this practices are listed in the Code of ethical issues and good research practices ICH E6 and the Strategic Plan, which are available to the researchers.

- ✓ The research is developing following the **legal and ethical rules** listed in the Code of ethical issues and good research practices and regulated by the Ethics Committees (Clinical Research Ethics Committee (CEIC), Biomedical Research Ethics Committee (CEIB), external ethics committee of biobank and research collections (CEBCI), Ethics Committee for Animal Experimentation (CEEA)).

- ✓ The IIS La Fe **recruitment policy** is committed to provide impartial conditions to ensure fair selection process and thereby ensure the election of the best professional suited to a position. The recruitment process is regulated by internal procedures that ensure the open diffusion of the vacancy and the transparency in the selection process. The selection panels are composed accordingly with the characteristic of the vacancy and are formed by at least one member of each party (Research Institute, Hospital and Research group). The panel has to discuss about the requirements, competence and suitability of candidates, without discrimination. The call may be void if the candidates do not qualify for the position.

- ✓ **Exploitation of the results** is an important issue from the IIS La Fe. To help to the researchers in the process of dissemination and protection of their research results the IIS La Fe has the Technology Transfer Office (OTRI). Furthermore, informative cycles of innovation are organized. The Biopolo Strategy, leader by IIS La Fe, is a business initiative to drive the most innovative ideas in health from the bench to the market.

- ✓ Members of the research community are included on all the **decision making bodies** (example; research committee, direction, work council and ethical committees). The Director of the IIS La Fe is a team leader of one of the research units of the institution. The research committee is formed by researchers in representation of "accredited groups" and "mixed units", teaching commission, nursing management and biomedical research ethics committee. In the maximum organ of decision, the board of trustees, there are scientists internal and external to the institution.

- ✓ The IIS La Fe is compromised with research **communication/dissemination skills and public engagement activities.** Some examples include; newsletters, intranet, e-mail,

whatsnews (whatsapp), web, press releases, social and professional networks. IIS La Fe Scientific annual report. More specific society training activities are; "Research with us", "Con-Ciencia TV", "Funny Research" and "Your hospital investigates for you".

- ✓ **Initiatives promoting R&D+I;** there are several internal programs funding by the IIS La Fe to promote the research. These programs represent an active force for promoting the internal research activity. Representative examples are training programs, postdoctoral or research grants, and collaborative agreements with universities and technological centers.

- ✓ IIS La Fe advocates the **continued professional development of its researchers**. Training, coaching and mentoring are common practice activities. It counts with structured groups where there is a commitment to supervision by the leader. Moreover, there is an attractive offer of resources for improving the researchers training composed by the organization of scientific conferences, the collaboration agreements with leading universities of the Valencian Community and the clinical teaching program AulaFe.

Key weaknesses identify;

- ✓ Scientific management system is well stablished but it can be improved by ISO certification
- ✓ There is not a collective agreement for working conditions.
- ✓ Low recognition of mobility experience.
- ✓ Few strategies to attract and retain talent.
- ✓ Lack of a plan for research career development.

Internal analysis of current initiatives and services of the IIS La Fe

Besides the internal Gap Analyses made upon the recommendations of the HRS4R Strategy for the implementation of the C&C, it has been considered to ask to the researchers about their opinion on the initiatives and strategies currently provided by the entity.

The objective is to have a global vision before making an action plan, not only designed to reach and maintain the C&C code but also to improve the organization and towards ensuring the sustainability of research in the future.

The methodology used has been a qualitative method with focus groups for collection of the perceptions of researchers on specific topics.

The participants are researchers at the IIS La Fe who were selected based on three main conditions: relevance of their research activity (senior and junior researchers), be a member of the Research Commission or member of the Clinical Research Area. A total of 68 doctors were summoned, of which 49 attended (74%), representing near 25% of the workforce.

Assess and prioritize the services currently provided by the IIS La Fe:

The participants filled out a survey to assess the initiatives already launched by the IIS La Fe, prioritizing within them their importance.
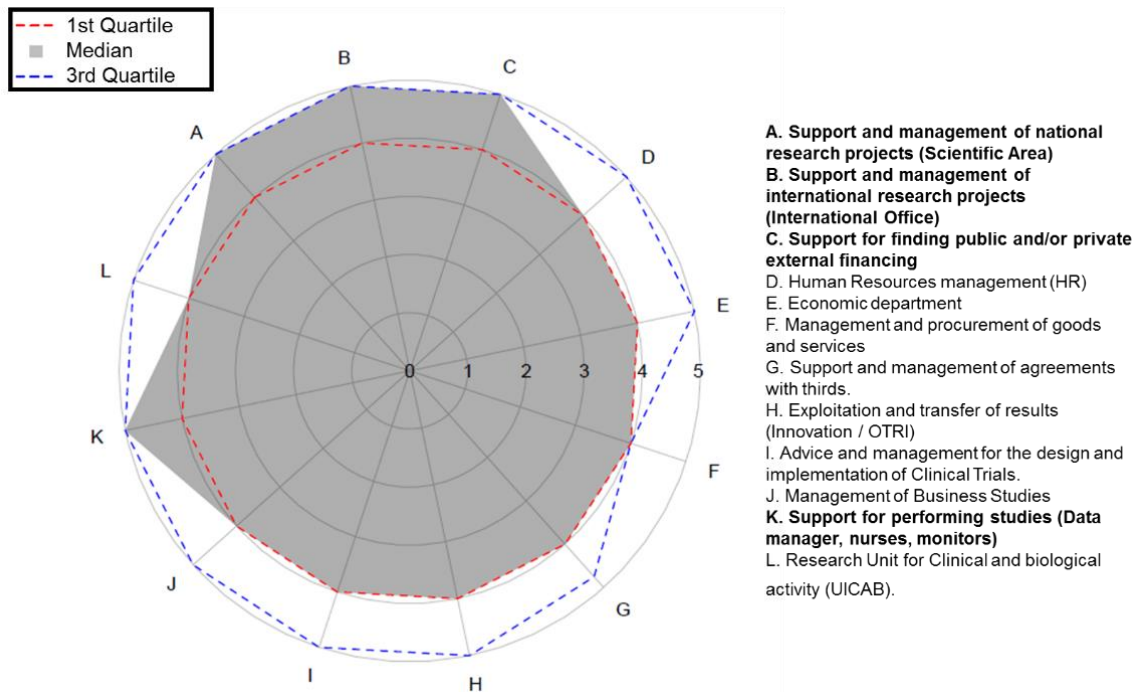
The questionnaire used for the quantitative study consists of two main sections. The first is the assessment of management activities and services provided by the IIS La Fe; while the second is the evaluation of the priority (importance) of the various initiatives of the Institute. For both sections used Likert scale with five possible answers, understanding one as very bad/not important and 5 very good/very important.

For analysis of the results it has been used the median that indicates the central value within the set of ordered answers, which has been obtained for each item. This makes it possible to know

the most representative response avoiding extreme data. The average or assessment of the percentage of responses 4 and 5 are not suitable statistical parameters in this case because: (1) the distribution of responses is not normal (is bounded between 1 and 5) and (2) they do not allow use an estimate of the appropriate variability to this dataset (the standard deviation is not useful when the data distribution is not normal).

To analyze data from the prioritization of initiatives it has been used the median and the first and third quartile. These parameters have been calculated in order to discriminate initiatives that should be encouraged and those that are not so relevant. From the value of the first and third quartile it is possible to estimate the range of values within which would be most of the views of the population.

1. **Evaluation of priority (importance) of management activities and services provided by the IIS La Fe:**

A. Support and management of national research projects (Scientific Area)
B. Support and management of international research projects (International Office)
C. Support for finding public and/or private external financing
D. Human Resources management (HR)
E. Economic department
F. Management and procurement of goods and services
G. Support and management of agreements with thirds.
H. Exploitation and transfer of results (Innovation / OTRI)
I. Advice and management for the design and implementation of Clinical Trials.
J. Management of Business Studies
K. Support for performing studies (Data manager, nurses, monitors)
L. Research Unit for Clinical and biological activity (UICAB).

Figure 1, prioritization of management activities and services provided by the IIS La Fe. It is highlighted in bold those who have been rated as most important (Scientific Area, International Office, support for studies…).

2. Prioritization of channels dissemination of scientific and medical findings:
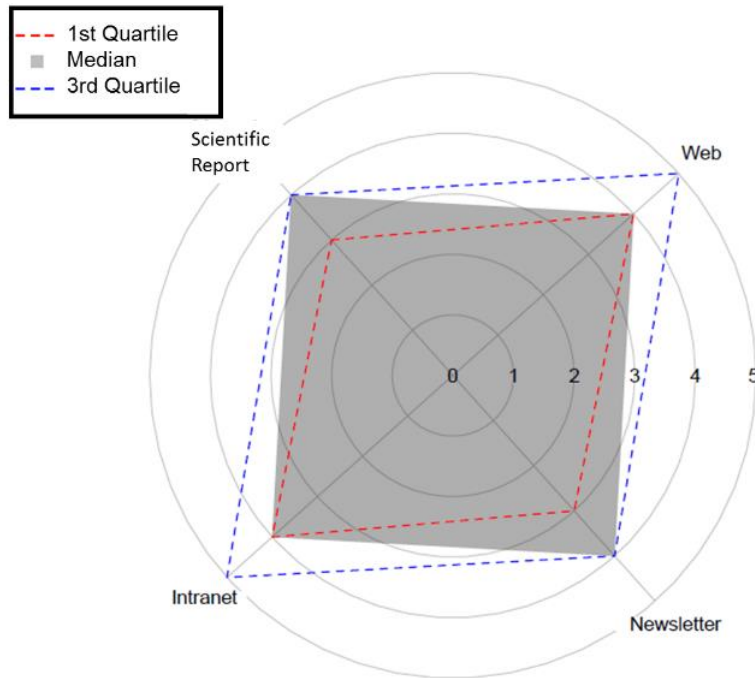
Figure 2, prioritization of channels of dissemination of scientific and medical findings, the results denote a slight preference for the website and the intranet.
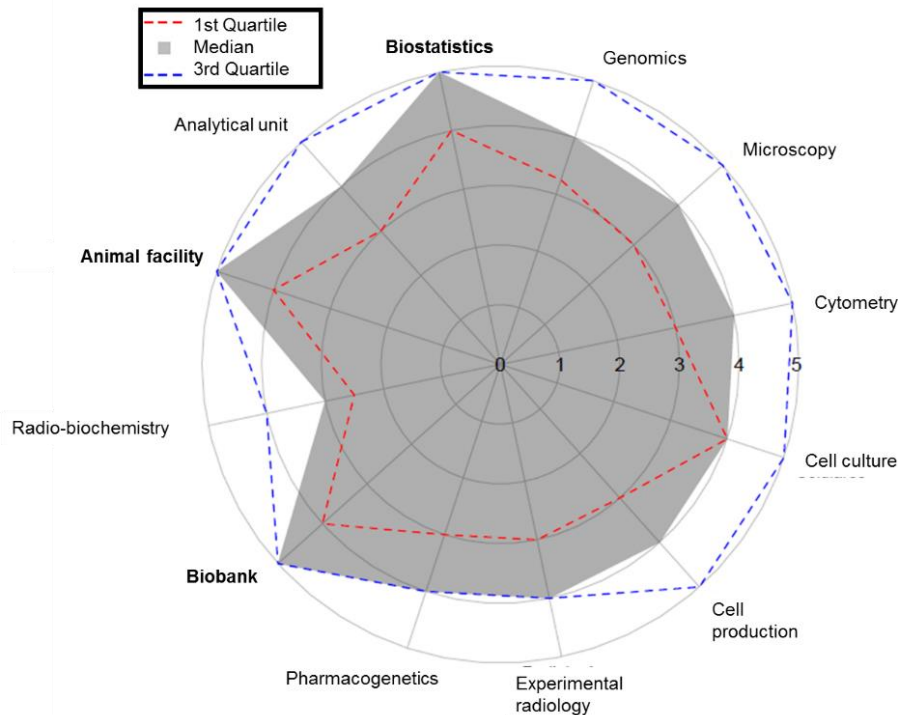
3. Prioritization of initiatives promoting R&D+i:
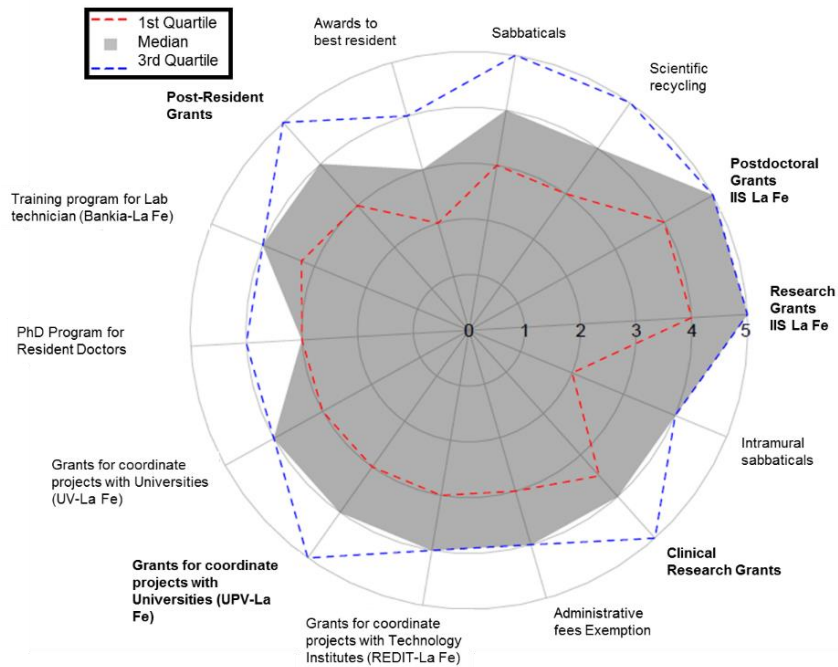
Figure 3, prioritization of initiatives promoting R&D+i. The opinions are presented regarding initiatives to promote R&D+i, using the median and the first and third quartile.

4. Prioritization of the research support platforms:

Figure 4, priority of platforms supporting research. The best qualified are Biostatistics, Biobank and Animal facility.

From the previous study it can be conclude that the priorities of researchers focus on:

- ✓ Most valued areas are those supporting research activity and funding opportunities, such as the scientific area, the international office or the clinical assay support area.
- ✓ The best qualified channel for results dissemination are the annual scientific report and the newsletter.
- ✓ The best appreciated activities for promote the research are the postdoctoral and research grants and the projects with the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV).
- ✓ The biostatistics, biobank and animal facility platforms are the priority platforms for the researchers.

Overall, it can be conclude that the researchers viewed positively the current initiatives and strategies carried out by IIS La Fe to promote and disseminate the research. It is not arise to restructure them and they are tools to developing the action plan and the implantation of the C&C code.

Initiatives to be undertaken

Suitable actions will be develop to address all the gaps identify and focus to promote the researcher´s priorities. They will be listed in the **Annex II** (Action Plan). Delivery timelines and indicators for tracking process were also specify.

The Key actions in the IIS La Fe HR Strategy Action Plan are discussed below;

- ✓ **Good practice in research;** Researchers should adopt safe working practices and all the efforts are justify to improve working conditions. In the IIS La Fe Action Plan it is going to develop the current Code of Ethics and Good Research Practices, including new recommendations about safe practices and new consideration about working conditions and research training. Furthermore, it will be develop **an internal manual for the use of services and facilities,** to ensure the right use of them.

- ✓ **Science Management;** knowledge must be made by and for society. There is an effort in the Action Plan designed to establish and certificate the R&D management system to ensure the best way to work. Moreover, it will be taken strategies to ensure both the dissemination and the exploitation of the results, promoting innovative and transference skills.

- ✓ **Recruitment practices** are open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable. Moreover, they are carried out following the national and international laws. The present part of the Action Plan wants to modify the currents selection criteria to consider important C&C advice as the recognition of mobility, between others. Furthermore, it is going to create a strategic framework to increase the incorporation of international talented researchers to the institutional. Finally, it is going to address better welcome practices.

- ✓ **Research career framework;** development of an IIS La Fe Research Career Framework which consist in the implementation of strategies of evaluation and internal promotion criteria looking for the stability of the researchers.

- ✓ **Collective agreement;** it is planned to collect the opportunities and commitments between the researcher and the institution by a collective agreement setting out the bases of the working conditions. This document aims to provide initiatives to reach the quality in the employ, for example, considering working conditions that allow the possibility of better practices to conciliate family and work, between other initiatives.

- ✓ The HRS4R made several times allusion to the importance of **training and continuing professional development,** the IIS La Fe is very active in training, however it is wanted to collect all of this activities in a plan which in turn take into account the activities of mentoring and internationalization.

Action Plan implementation

Finally, for carrying out the Action Plan it has been created a **HRS4R Technical Team**. This team is composed by the following IIS La Fe Departments:

- Rosario Pellejero (Quality Department)
- Adriana Sandoval (Health and Safety Department)
- Ainhoa Genoves (Scientific Area)
- Silvia Sanchez (Technology Transfer Office (OTRI))
- Mayte Cortell (HR Department)
- Vanesa Garzón (Communication Department)
- Ana Blanco (International Office)
- Begoña Jeweinat (Clinical Research Area)
- Carlos Miñana (Legal Department)
- Elena Aristoy (Works Council)
- Sabrina Femenia (Management)
- José María Millán (Research Committee)

To ensure the proper monitoring of the HRS4R Action Plan at the IIS La Fe it has been created the **HRS4R Steering Committee**. This committee is composed by:

- Sabrina Femenia (Management)
- Jose Vicente Castell (General Manager)

Conclusions

This document has been elaborated by the IIS La Fe for putting forward the integration inside the C&C strategy. Both actions, the currently carried out (Gap Analysis) and the actions to take into account in the future (Action Plan), have been deep studied in the commitment of the IIS La Fe to act in a responsible and respectable way, and to provide a framework of conditions fair and attractive to researchers for developing their activity at the institution.