



Willem Staels, pediatrician at UZ Brussel and Co-Principal Investigator in BENE, has been awarded the 'Young Investigator Award 2021' by the European Society for Pediatric Endocrinology (ESPE) for his groundbreaking research in diabetes. This prize is awarded annually to young promising researchers for outstanding scientific work in the field of pediatric endocrinology. His research aims to find a real cure for diabetes and focuses on a better understanding of beta cells.

Dixit Willem: “Insulin is not a cure for diabetes, but it is merely a treatment. These are the words of Frederick Banting at the presentation of the Nobel Prize for the discovery of insulin. Now 100 years later, insulin remains the best treatment we have for type 1 diabetes, but one that is sub-optimal and that imposes a daily burden.”

Willem is convinced that we need to focus on the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas - these are the cells that are defective in diabetes - in order to go from 'care' to 'cure' in diabetes.

Willem studies how beta cells function, how we can protect and restore them so that these cells ensure an automated finely regulated blood sugar control. The focus of his research is on the role of blood vessels and their interaction with beta cells in the context of regeneration and transplantation.