

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (Agradecimientos)	VII
THESIS OUTLINE	XI
Abstract	xi
Resumen	xiv
Resum	xvii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	XXI
LIST OF FIGURES	XXV
LIST OF TABLES.....	XXVII
ABBREVIATIONS	XXIX
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1. The ear	2
1.1 The cochlea	3
1.2 Mechanotransduction and hearing.....	3
1.3 The vestibular system	4
1.4 Hearing loss.....	6
1.5 Vestibular dysfunctions.....	8
2. The eye	8
2.1 The retina	8
2.2 Phototransduction.....	10
2.3 Inherited retinal dystrophies.....	11
3. Usher syndrome.....	12
3.1 Clinical manifestations of Usher syndrome	13
3.2 Genetics of Usher syndrome.....	14
3.2.1 Genes involved in Usher syndrome type 1	15

<i>MYO7A</i>	15
<i>USH1C</i>	16
<i>CDH23</i>	16
<i>PCDH15</i>	17
<i>USH1G</i>	17
<i>CIB2</i>	18
3.2.2 Genes involved in Usher syndrome type 2	18
<i>USH2A</i>	18
<i>ADGRV1</i>	19
<i>WHRN</i>	19
3.2.3 Genes involved in Usher syndrome type 3	20
<i>CLRN1</i>	20
3.2.4 The USH interactome.....	22
3.3 Molecular diagnosis of Usher syndrome.....	24
3.3.1 Genetic etiology determination.....	24
3.3.2 HTS and its application to USH diagnostics	25
3.4 Therapeutic approaches for Usher syndrome	27
3.4.1 Pharmacological approaches	27
3.4.2 Gene therapies.....	28
3.4.2.1 Gene augmentation therapies.....	29
3.4.2.2 Antisense Oligonucleotides.....	30
3.4.2.3 Gene editing	31
3.4.3 Cell therapy	31
3.4.4 Prosthetic systems	33
3.4.5 Optogenetic strategies	33
THESIS OBJECTIVES	39
CHAPTER I: <i>USH2A</i> gene editing using the CRISPR system.....	41
Abstract.....	42
Introduction.....	43
Results.....	45
Discussion	51
Materials and Methods.....	55

CHAPTER II: <i>HTS for the molecular diagnosis of USH</i>	63
Abstract.....	64
Introduction.....	65
Methods.....	66
Results.....	73
Discussion	85
CHAPTER III: <i>Expanding the genetic landscape of Usher-like phenotypes</i>	91
Abstract.....	92
Introduction.....	93
Methods.....	94
Results.....	97
Discussion	103
GENERAL DISCUSSION	112
Apropos the CRISPR-based edition approach.....	112
Cas9 engineered modifications for increased on-target specificity.....	113
The matter of NHEJ offshoots and predominance over	115
Towards knock-in enhancement	115
Reaching the target organ.....	117
Cas9 human immunogenicity	118
On the subject of the HTS venture.....	120
The enigma of the USH unsolved cases	121
The importance of an accurate clinical assessment	122
Reconsidering past and future USH genetic disclosures.....	123
CONCLUSIONS	128
APPENDIX	132
Supplementary information appertaining Chapter II.....	132
Supplementary information appertaining Chapter III.....	134
REFERENCES	140