

## 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM A GREAT SUCCESS

The December event was a great success and celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Society for Medicines Research (SMR). The origins of the Society can be traced back to a symposium organized by members of the Pharmacy Department of Chelsea College in London in 1965. The following year, the *Society for Drug Research* was formed. It was granted Charitable status in 1977 and changed its name to the *Society for Medicines Research* in 1994. This anniversary meeting aimed to showcase the best of medicines research and was organized in collaboration with the London Biotechnology Network and UK Trade and Investment (UKTI). The venue was the Department of Trade and Industry conference centre in Westminster and attracted over 300 delegates. The meeting began with an overview of future strategies for medicines research, and its funding, in Europe which included a description of a new public-private partnership called the Innovative Medicines Initiative. The IMI has been formed through a collaboration between the European Commission and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). This presentation was followed by the 2006 SMR Award lecture, which was given by Dr Napoleone Ferrara of Genentech for the development of the anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) antibody Avastin (bevacizumab) for the treatment of cancer. Dr Ferrara was presented the award (see photo to get a sense of the large piece of Welsh slate that constituted this year's prize) and is to be

congratulated for transporting it back to the US in one piece. The remainder of the meeting showcased the best of medicines research in the UK by highlighting a number of drug discovery success stories from several UK biotech companies, which covered the therapeutic areas of central nervous system, cancer and viral infection, along with regenerative medicine.

We were delighted that a number of former trustees were able attend the meeting and join in the celebration. These included Cathy Wilson, John Cavalla, John Archibald, David Cavalla and Robin Ganellin.



The 2006 SMR Award lecture was given by Dr Napoleone Ferrara of Genentech for the development of the anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) antibody Avastin (bevacizumab) for the treatment of cancer. Dr Ferrara is seen being presented with the Award by SMR Chairman, Alan Palmer.

## SMR WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS TO THE COMMITTEE

At our AGM we welcomed a number of new members to the committee: Andrew Ratcliffe, (USB), Ruth Lock (Novartis) and Jon Tinsley (VASTox). We also saw a number of individuals leave the SMR committee, including Geoff Stemp (GSK) and Barry Potter (University of Bath). I should like to thank them both for their efforts and contributions to the Society. In particular, I should like to acknowledge the

substantial service Geoff Stemp has made to the Society over a number of years and in the capacity of both Treasurer and Chairman. Dr Rob Williams (CRUK) was elected vice chairman. The minutes of the AGM are distributed with this newsletter and provide an interesting insight into the operation of your society.

-Alan Palmer, SMR Chairman

## ADDRESSING THE INNOVATION GAP IN PHARMACEUTICAL R&D

Our March meeting held at The National Heart and Lung Institute addressed a key issue for the pharmaceutical industry: The fact that more money is being spent on medicines research than ever before and yet the number of new drug approvals is declining. This 'innovation gap' was considered in detail by seven distinguished speakers. These included Dr Simon Campbell, who was World-wide Head of Pfizer Drug Discovery during its most productive era. Dr Campbell was a key member of the research teams which discovered Cardura and Norvasc (leading products in each of their therapeutic areas) and was senior author on the paper that led to the development of Viagra. A biotech success story in medicines research was presented by Dr Roger

Hickling, Director of R&D at Alizyme. An approach to improve the efficiency of drug discovery was described by Dr Alastair Lawson from UCB Pharma. The contribution of academic research was considered by Dr Colin Wyatt and the prospect of informatics making a difference was reviewed by Dr Darren Green (GlaxoSmithKline). Dr Steve Toon (SimCyp Ltd) reviewed advances in drug development from a clinical perspective. Finally, John Lindon (Imperial College) introduced metabonomics succinctly described as the quantitative measurement of time-related multiparametric metabolic responses of living systems to pathophysiological stimuli or gene modification.

## ELI LILLY AND UCB PHARMA TO HOST MEETINGS IN 2007

This year we will be holding two meetings away from London. The first is to be hosted by Eli Lilly and will focus on neurodegenerative disorders and their treatment. The meeting will review the progress made in the discovery and development of medicines to treat neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, traumatic brain injury, stroke and multiple sclerosis, and consider future prospects for effective pharmacotherapy, including the possibility of modifying the course of neurodegenerative disorders.

In September we will be travelling to Hinxton Hall, Cambridge for a meeting on 'Emerging

therapies for respiratory disorders' and hosted by UCB Pharma. We will be returning to London in December for a meeting on 'Recent disclosures of Clinical Candidates'

Student bursaries are available for both these meetings and members are encouraged to draw the attention of their younger colleagues to this opportunity.

I hope to see you at one of these meetings. If you would like to become involved in the organisation or have a hot topic which could form the basis of a meeting please let us know.

Alan Palmer, Chairman

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### Dates for your diary: SMR Meetings in 2007

1. 'Neurodegenerative disorders and their treatments.'  
6th June 2007.  
Eli Lilly, Windlesham, Surrey.
2. 'Emerging therapies for respiratory disorders.'  
11th September 2007.  
Hinxton Hall, Cambridge.
3. 'Recent disclosures of clinical drug candidates.'  
6th December 2007.  
NHLI, London.