

Healthcare industry BW

Winners of the "Science2Start" ideas competition honoured

BioRegio STERN Management GmbH honoured the three winners of the regional "Science2Start" ideas competition last Thursday evening. The award ceremony was part of the traditional summer soirée given by BioRegio STERN Management GmbH in collaboration with TTR Technologieparks Tübingen-Reutlingen GmbH, the Verein zur Förderung der Biotechnologie und der Medizintechnik e.V. (Society for the Promotion of Biotechnology and Medical Technology) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK) in Reutlingen.

The main prize in this year's ideas competition was awarded to the "BioMEMS & sensors" working group from the NMI Natural and Medical Sciences Institute at the University of Tübingen in Reutlingen for the development of a new micro-reference electrode. Engineers and chemists Massimo Kubon, Tobias Ensslen and Gorden Steve Link have succeeded in using ion-conductive polymer material to miniaturise a major functional element of chemical online monitoring, thus simplify the monitoring of metabolites and biological/chemical production processes significantly. Their reference electrode exhibits long-term stability, can be stored and sterilised and is also biocompatible. The panel of judges for this year's Science2Start competition – comprising scientists, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs – was impressed because the feasibility of this project has already been tested successfully in the laboratory so that it can now be applied on a widespread scale in conjunction with industrial partners in areas such as monitoring intensive care patients and environmental and food analysis.

Scientific ideas with economic potential

Second prize went to the "Computomics" start-up idea, a spin-off of the Center for Bioinformatics at the University of Tübingen. The two founders, Sebastian J. Schultheiss and Dr. Tobias Dezulian, are bioinformaticians who previously worked at the Max Planck Society's Friedrich Miescher Laboratory and at the Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology. At the heart of their idea is a tool that enables particularly high-quality analysis of DNA sequence data. Among other things, this innovative service is extremely valuable for applications such as seed breeding, cancer research and drug development.

Third place was awarded to Tübingen-based researcher Prof. Ulrich Schraermeyer and Dr. Sylvie Julien of the Centre for Ophthalmology at the University Hospital Tübingen, Experimental Vitreoretinal Surgery section. They received the award in recognition of their idea to use an active substance to treat the dry form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD impairs a patient's sight and can ultimately lead to complete blindness if decades of toxic lipofuscin consisting of metabolites that cannot be excreted by the cells accumulate in the retinal pigment epithelium, a layer of cells in the eye. The researchers have now discovered that a specific active substance can help break down most of the lipofuscin, thus enabling it to be excreted.

The prizes, worth a total of 4,500 euros, were once again sponsored by Reutlingen-based Völker & Partner, a firm of lawyers, tax consultants and auditors. Christian O. Erbe, President of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) in Reutlingen and Managing Partner of ERBE Elektromedizin GmbH in Tübingen, presented the certificates during the evening and also had a few tips for future entrepreneurs: "You can't do everything at once all by yourself. Be bold and start new businesses, but take advice before you set off." Dr. Klaus Eichenberg, Managing Director of BioRegio STERN Management GmbH, presented the awards for the fourth time: "I'm delighted to see the rising number of entries. The high standard of these start-up projects underpins the fact that scientific excellence and economic potential are well linked in our region." Evidence of this fact were the 350 entrepreneurs, scientists, politicians, consultants and financiers attending the event who used the evening at the Tübingen-Reutlingen Technology Park not only for lively discussions but also to develop further outstanding business ideas.

Press release

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