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Nature Publishing Group and InnoCentive award Solver in the DND*i* Challenge to fight infectious diseases

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Nature Publishing Group (NPG) and **InnoCentive**, the world leader in open innovation, today announced that Solver Sandip Bharate has been awarded $10,000 for his solution to a Challenge posted on the nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion (**www.nature.com/openinnovation**) by ***Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative*** (DND*i*) in January of this year. Solver Bharate is a Postdoctoral Scientist in Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Science from Missoula, Montana.

The Challenge was posted by DND*i* on the nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion, and jointly hosted by InnoCentive. DND*i* sought validation of its existing efforts and new starting points for a target-based approach to drug discovery for kinetoplastid infectious diseases. They sought proposals highlighting molecular targets and associated small molecule compounds that could be used as leads to drive the drug discovery process. InnoCentive provided their Challenge development and screening services pro-bono and NPG offered a $10,000 award for the successful solution.

Kinetoplastid infectious diseases are tropical diseases that affect the lives of 30 million people in more than 88 countries. These diseases, most of which are transmitted by insects, include African Sleeping Sickness, Visceral Leishmaniasis, Cutaneous Leishmaniasis, and Chagas Disease.

"By opening up this question to the nature.com users and InnoCentive Solvers, we were hoping to get an unbiased, comprehensive review of potential targets, above and beyond those already considered by experts in the field" says Rob Don, Discovery & Preclinical Director at DND*i*. "The winning solution actually unearthed some very interesting new leads which we look forward to exploring."

The submissions were judged by a panel at DND*i* along with two appointed judges. The first, Dr. Alan Hudson, is a medicinal chemist who has acted as an advisor to Product Development Partnerships and global public health bodies in the field of infectious tropical diseases. The second, Dr. Simon Croft, is the Professor of Parasitology and Head of the Department of Infectious and Tropical Diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

In an extensive, 46-page review of the scientific and patent literature, the winning Solver presented a list of 33 chemically validated targets along with 86 small molecules that have been shown to specifically affect these targets. Sandip Bharate described the existing knowledge with a wealth of detail, including a shortlist of the 11 most promising candidates.

"The importance of this Challenge and further revalidation of open innovation as a tool for progressing research and cures in neglected diseases cannot be overestimated." says InnoCentive CEO Dwayne Spradlin. "We are proud to be part of this initiative to combat some of the world's deadliest, and least understood diseases."

"We look forward to continuing our work with InnoCentive on the nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion through the presentation of new Challenges," says Veronique Kiermer, Publisher, Methods, Protocols and Products at Nature Publishing Group. "It is thrilling for us to see our readers apply their knowledge to solve practical and global problems and to assist not-for-profits such as DND*i*."

Launched in June 2009, the nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion is jointly hosted on Innocentive.com and nature.com, and provides a hub for scientific collaboration and open innovation. Companies and not-for-profit organizations (known as 'Seekers') can post 'Challenges' in life sciences, physical sciences and clinical medicine on the nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion. These 'Challenges' are briefs allowing Seekers to tap into external expertise to solve research problems or drive new ideas. Successful Solvers receive financial rewards. Seekers can call on the expertise of nature.com's five million monthly visitors and InnoCentive's network of more than 200,000 Solvers. To date, 44 Challenges have been posted in the nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion. 17 of these Challenges have already been awarded a total amount of $225,000 for satisfactory solutions.

-ENDS-

Links:

$10,000 challenge launches to fight infectious diseases affecting 30 million people (press release, 29 January 2010)
Nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion
InnoCentive and Nature Publishing Group launch nature.com Open Innovation Pavilion (press release, 2 June 2009)
Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DND*i*): **www.dndi.org**
InnoCentive: **www.innocentive.com**

About Nature Publishing Group (NPG)

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About InnoCentive

Founded in 2001, InnoCentive built the first global web community for open innovation, enabling scientists, engineers, professionals and entrepreneurs to collaborate to deliver breakthrough solutions for R&D-driven organizations. InnoCentive Seekers, who collectively spend billions of dollars on R&D, submit complex problems to the InnoCentive Marketplace where more than 200,000 engineers, scientists, inventors, business people, and research organizations in more than 200 countries are invited to solve them. Solvers who deliver the most innovative solutions receive financial awards ranging up to US$1,000,000. InnoCentive's Seekers include commercial, government and non-profit organizations such as Avery Dennison, SAP, Procter & Gamble, Pendulum, Eli Lilly and Company, Janssen, Solvay and The Rockefeller Foundation. For more information on InnoCentive, go to: **www.innocentive.com**

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About DND*i*

The Drugs for Neglected Diseases *initiative* (DND*i*) is a not-for-profit product development partnership working to research and develop new and improved treatments for neglected disease, in particular human African trypanosomiasis, leishmaniasis, Chagas disease, and malaria. With the objective to address unmet patient needs for these diseases, DND*i* was established in 2003 by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation from Brazil, the Indian Council for Medical Research, the Kenya Medical Research Institute, the Ministry of Health of Malaysia, the Pasteur Institute, and Médecins sans Frontiéres (MSF). WHO/TDR acts as a permanent observer. Working in partnership with industry and academia, DND*i* has the largest ever R&D portfolio for kinetoplastid diseases. Since 2007, DND*i* has delivered three products, fixed-dose anti-malarials "ASAQ" and "ASMQ", and a combination treatment for the advanced stage of sleeping sickness NECT (nifurtimox-eflornithine combination therapy). For more information: **www.dndi.org**.

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