

Three Boston Startups Win Biotech Tuesday Innovation Awards

Boston area startups Cocoon Biotech, Riparian Pharmaceuticals, Cellanyx Diagnostics, and DavosPharma were awarded \$22K in funds and in-kind services at an innovation competition held by Biotech Tuesday, a Cambridge-based networking organization for life science professionals.



left-to-right : Execs from EMD Serono, Novartis and Lab Central

At an event on November 19th event, executives from EMD Serono, Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research and LabCentral chose the winning startup pitches from among five finalists' presentations. The finalists were selected from an initial field of thirteen online entries based, in part, on online feedback from BiotechTuesday members. The three winners were all therapeutics and diagnostics startups proposing solutions to challenging medical problems.

Cocoon Biotech, Inc., led by CEO and founder Ailis Tweed-Kent, a doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital won the \$5000 EMD Serono Innovation Award. Cocoon Biotech is developing a silk-based gel for injection into the joint to provide long lasting joint support and lubrication in patients with

osteoarthritis. EMD Serono is the biopharmaceutical subsidiary of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a global pharmaceutical and chemical group.

Riparian Pharmaceuticals, led by Will Adam, Chief Scientific Officer and President, won both the \$10,000 in-kind Novartis Innovation Award and the \$3000 in-kind Pharmatek Innovation Award. Riparian Pharmaceuticals is focused on therapeutics that induce an anti-inflammatory response in cells to address diseases such as atherosclerosis. Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research, Inc. discovers and develops new and innovative medicines. Pharmatek Laboratories, Inc. is a premier pharmaceutical chemistry development and manufacturing organization supporting the pharmaceutical & biotechnology industries.

Cellanx Diagnostics, led by Co-Founder and CEO Ashok Chander, won the \$4000 in-kind LabCentral Innovation Award. Cellanx is developing a prostate cancer diagnostic based on culturing tumor biopsy cells that promises to be much more accurate than current diagnostics. LabCentral provides fully functional lab space, permits, waste handling, plus all reasonably common lab equipment for bioresearch.

In addition to awarding startups, the event also acknowledged the contribution of life science products and services in enabling cutting edge research for new therapeutics. DavosPharma won the Most Innovative Product or Service Award in recognition of its Anthem-GenTox product. This product offers scientists a high throughput genotoxicity assay based on human cells with greatly improved accuracy over conventional methods.

“This was Biotech Tuesday’s first innovation competition—but by no means its last, “said BioTechTuesday Co-Founder Seth Taylor, who organizes BiotechTuesday and served as master of ceremonies for the event.” The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly in favor of the competition,” Taylor said. “We

look forward to continuing our efforts to engage our broad community of life science professionals in supporting innovators.”

The competition took place at District Hall, a new event space at 75 Northern Avenue in the Boston Seaport District.

–Anita Harris

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