

Riding the Economic Wave-Challenges and Opportunities Report on the 8th Annual San Diego Bio-Pharma Conference



Dr. Xiangming Fang

The 8th Annual San Diego Bio-Pharma Conference entitled “Riding the Economic Wave-Challenges and Opportunities” attracted unprecedented 600 Biopharma professionals on a rare sunny Saturday after consecutive June Gloom days and a few “gloomy” months for San Diego biotech companies.



Dr. Roger Tsien

Dr. Xiangming Fang, president of SABPA-San Diego, kicked off the meeting by giving a brief overview of the agenda and the backgrounds of the speakers, which include a number of all-stars in their fields. Dr. Hui Cai, chairwoman of the SABPA Board, then led the first session and introduced the keynote speaker, last year’s Nobel Prize winner, Roger Tsien. Dr. Tsien presented the latest breakthrough imaging technology, which is not related to his Nobel Prize winning work on green fluorescence protein. The so-called activated cell penetrating peptides (ACPP) technology can result in tumor or tissue specific labeling, therefore offering promising potentials in many clinical settings such as guiding tumor removal with much improved accuracy during surgeries. Dr. Sheng Ding, a young rising star in applying chemical biology into stem cell research, presented his innovative approach in discovering novel chemicals, which could control the fate of stem cells in various systems. Moreover, he was able to identify the biological targets and related pathways hit by some of these novel chemicals. These impressive works clearly help to accelerate the emerging stem cell field towards future therapeutic applications.



Dr. Sheng Ding

Following the two top-notch scientific presentations, Mr. Steve Danon, who represented Congressman Brian Bilbray, gave a speech on the ever increasing role of science in the nation’s economy.



The audience

The following session was the panel discussion on evolving business models for Bio-Pharma R&D. The session moderator Mr. Jack Florio, SVP of Brinson Patrick Securities Corporation was introduced by Dr. Ming Guo. The panel had generated some very interesting debates on funding opportunities for different business models at different stages of the drug development cycle in different therapeutic and target areas. Dr. David Kabakoff shared his experience first as an executive on Salmedix’s success story, then as

a venture capitalist on identifying investment opportunities. Mr. Christopher LeMasters and Mr. Randy Woods discussed their strategies of obtaining capitals in the current environment for small biotech companies like Tragara Pharmaceuticals and Sequel Pharmaceuticals, and the current trends of negotiating partnerships with big pharmaceuticals. Dr. Stephen Chang offered his insights from the reagent side of the business and his start-up experience with Stemgent. Exit strategies including mergers and acquisitions were also discussed. The panel also addressed questions from the audience regarding how to strike a balance between earlier stage research, later stage product development and in-licensing opportunities.

The afternoon session began with the presentation of the San Diego Bio-Pharma Achievement Award to the renowned chemist K.C. Nicolaou by Dr. Hui Li, Vice Chair of the SABPA Board. Dr. Nicolaou then gave a brilliant talk on synthetic strategies of natural products and the related chemical biology studies. To avoid confusion, reorganize the sentence. The first speaker, Dr. David Ke from Amgen, presented their pioneer works on the identification of sclerostin as a new drug target in regulating bone formation and the development of sclerostin neutralizing antibody which has exhibited promising pre-clinical and clinical data in treating osteoporosis. Dr. Lloyd Tilman from ISIS pharmaceuticals, a pioneer in developing antisense RNA based therapy, described ISIS' novel formulation strategies to achieve oral delivery of antisense molecules, one of the biggest hurdles in RNA-based therapies.

The "Swine Flu" outbreak has generated many headlines this year, and it became the topic of the last session of the symposium. Dr. Suixiong Cai, introduced a distinguished panel that includes the session moderator Dr. Eldora Ellison from Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox PLLC, Dr. Graham Lidgard from Nanogen, Dr. David Looney from UCSD Medical Center, Dr. Ronald B. Moss from NexBio, Dr. Sean M. Sullivan from Vical and Dr. Christina Yang from Gen-Probe. The panelists offered their insights on the epidemic, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of swine flu. The panelists also discussed how CDC and the FDA responded to the outbreak of swine flu, and the opportunities and challenges for the industry to work with government agencies to combat swiftly against such a contagious disease.

Given the current job market, this symposium also set up a job bulletin and had attracted



The Exhibition



The business panel. From left: Jack Florio, David Kabakoff, Christopher LeMasters, Randy Woods, and Stephen Chang



The Job Fair



Dr. K.C. Nicolaou and Dr. Hui Li



Drs. Graham Lidgard (left) and Christina Yang (right)

executive search firm like Med Exec International to the conference. Flyers with job posts from Bio-Phase, WuXi Apptech, Ardeas, GeneScript and CACO were distributed at the event and had generated a lot of inquiries. Job seekers also benefited from the networking opportunities provided by the event.

Record number of attendees, speakers, and sponsors provided overwhelmingly positive feedback to this well-organized symposium, especially given the current battered economy and downturn of the biotech industry. This huge success is the result of months of hard work by the Conference Organization Committee, many SABPA team members and volunteers. SABPA and SDCA had their 2nd year collaboration to make this event a success. For more information and photo report please visit <http://www.sdbiopharma.org/2009/bio-index.htm>



Organizers and VIP. From left: Xiangming Fang, Hui Li, Hui Cai, Consul Xiangdong Ye, Consul Cheng Wu, and Ming Guo



Networking: attendees and organizer, Peter Zhu (middle)

