

Open Source Drug Discovery gathers steam

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Open Source Drug Discovery Program gathers steam



Bangalore: The Open Source Drug Discovery (OSDD) program, a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) initiative in India, recently expanded its community to include over 6,000 researchers from 130 countries, actively engaged in drug discovery efforts for a variety of diseases as registered users of its SysBorg 2.0 portal. CSIR is India's largest research and development (R&D) organization.

Considered to be a brainchild of Dr Samir Brahmachari, director general, CSIR, this program was initiated in September 15, 2008. The OSDD website has stated that this response by the scientific community has been heartening, as it reflects the commitment of the members across the globe for the cause of affordable healthcare for all.

The OSDD is a CSIR-led team India consortium and a global partnership with the vision to provide affordable healthcare to the developing world by providing a platform for collaborations to solve complex problems associated with novel therapies for neglected tropical diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, leishmaniasis and others. It is a community driven open innovation platform to address the unmet need of research and development of drugs for diseases that affect the developing world. The OSDD is supported by direct funding from Government of India to the tune of \$12 million (Rs. 46 crore) with an overall project outlay of about \$46 million.

Earlier this year in March, CSIR had signed a memorandum of understanding between its OSDD initiative and the TB Alliance, an international non-profit organization that develops new, faster-acting, and affordable TB drugs. The MoU would

pave the way for clinical trials to be conducted in India through publicly funded institutions which are part of CSIR- OSDD' s extensive network of collaborators. The TB Alliance will contribute to the collaboration by bringing new TB drugs and regimens that are currently in its pipeline and show promise to treat both drug-sensitive and drug-resistant disease. These novel drugs or combinations of drugs that may ultimately gain regulatory approval will be available in India at affordable costs to the patients keeping with OSDD' s and TB Alliance's mission.

About the collaboration, Dr Samir Brahmachari, chief mentor, OSDD, had earlier commented that "CSIR is able to leverage its platform in this collaboration with the TB Alliance to ensure new TB drugs are developed right here in India,so that patients can receive these desperately needed life-saving treatments as soon as possible".

Interested individuals or organizations can join the initiative by logging on to the SysBorg 2.0 portal, the Web 3.0 system and cyberinfrastructure for collaborative research. The portal contains resources to effectively organise collaborations and tools to effectively mine and analyse the information collated by the OSDD community. The OSDD has also invited pharmaceutical companies and CROs who share a similar philosophy of affordable healthcare, to be a part of this movement.

The OSDD is a translational platform for drug discovery, bringing together informaticians, wet lab scientists, contract research organizations, clinicians, hospitals and others who are willing to adhere to the affordable healthcare philosophy. It is a concept to collaboratively aggregate the biological, genetic and chemical information available to scientists in order to use it to hasten the discovery of drugs. This will provide a unique opportunity for scientists, doctors, technocrats, students and others with diverse expertise to work for a common cause.