

Press Release 09 Oktober 2008

Innovation Award 2008 of the BioRegions in Germany

One winner is from North Rhine-Westphalia

Hanover, 09 October 2008 – The winners of the second ever Innovation Award of the German BioRegions were announced on the 7th October – three research groups from Munich, Rheinbach near Bonn, and Brunswick. **Thomas Böttcher**, together with **Dr. Stephan Sieber**, **Prof. Annette Kaiser**, and **Dr. Tobias May** were awarded joint prizes by Director General from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research together with Dr. Heinz Bettmann, BioCologne e.V. representing this year's sponsors. The ceremony took place as a highlight of the Biopolitics Conference.

This conference is part of the programme for this year's BIOTECHNICA, the leading fair for European biotechnology in Hanover. After the award ceremony, the winners presented their research projects to the specialist audience at the Innovation Forum.

The Innovation Award pays tribute to outstanding patents from the life sciences with high innovation and market potential. This year, the award went to projects from the areas of molecular cell differentiation, chemical microbiology, and malaria research.

"Technology transfer is one of the bioregions' main tasks. Not only do we aim to draw attention to particularly exciting projects, but we also aim to support their implementation with our Innovation Award," said Dr. Kai Uwe Bindseil, head of BioTOP Berlin-Brandenburg and spokesman of the BioRegions working group.

This year, individual scientists and research groups from all over Germany have submitted their proposals. "We were impressed by the quality and diversity of the projects. This is a good sign and reflects the high level of research", said Dr. Erika Sahrhage of BIO-OWL e.V, who also spoke on behalf

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of Uwe Seidel of BioIndustry e.V. Sahrhage and Seidel were the coordinators of this year's Innovation Award.

Financial support for the Innovation Award was provided by Deutsche Messe AG, BioCologne e.V., and Grund Intellectual Property Group in Munich.

Thomas Böttcher is working on his PhD in **Dr. Stephan Sieber's** lab at Ludwig Maximilian University CIPSM (Center for Integrated Protein Science) in Munich in the area of chemical microbiology. Within the framework of his PhD thesis, he developed a technique to identify cellular targets of beta-lactones in bacteria in order to investigate molecular mechanisms of action. A key regulator of the virulence of pathogenic bacteria was found, which is decisive not for the survival but rather for their pathogenic impact of the bacteria. The Innovation Award pays tribute to the work of both researchers, which has demonstrated that beta-lactones are a potentially promising starting point for tailor-made therapies aiming to treat diseases and their pathogens which are resistant to conventional antibiotics. www.cipsm.com

Prof. Annette Kaiser is involved in teaching and research at the Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, Rheinbach campus. She was awarded the Innovation Award in honour of research work in the field of drug treatments for malaria and the patented business idea for treating cerebral malaria using inhibitors of hypusin biosynthesis. Hypusin is considered an important target structure for treating infectious diseases such as malaria.

Prof. Kaiser discovered that an active substance, which is in phase II of a clinical study for use as an indicator of Crohn's disease, may also be used as a new indicator substance for the development of chemotherapeutic agents for the treatment of malaria. Industrial partners are required for the further development of the research activities. www.fh-brs.de

Dr. Tobias May from the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research (Department of Gene Regulation and Differentiation) in Brunswick works in the area of cell biology. As a PhD student, he developed a system that immortalises cells in a conditional (controllable) manner. In this way, it is possible to multiply mammalian cells at will with the aid of an external stimulus. The withdrawal of the stimulus causes the cells to differentiate from the immortalised to a tissue-like state. This invention means that new *in vitro* test systems with *in vivo*-like properties, promising a more efficient active-substance screening, will be available for pharmaceutical research. This patented technology will be launched on the market shortly. The InSCREENeX GmbH will continue working closely together with the HZI in Brunswyk, and it will be headed by Dr. May and Dr. Schucht. Tobias.May@helmholtz-hzi.de

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