

and deal with any administrative problems that arise.

The institute has established long lasting global links through its network of former post-doctoral scientists. The Director,

Professor Terumi Nakajima, an expert on insect toxins, is particularly keen on collaboration with scientists in countries with extensive, but only partially explored, natural resources such as China and Australia.

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## BioPartnering on the Net

The 4th annual BioPartnering Europe (BPE) conference took place last October at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London. Most conferences revolve around sessions interspersed with visits to the exhibition for light relief. Here the converse is true. BPE offers delegates from investment houses, the major pharmaceutical companies and other potential collaborators the chance to interface with innovative new bioscience companies. In four exhibition sessions held over two days, more than 60 companies are each given a 2–3 hour opportunity to showcase their technologies through interactive poster demonstrations. Each company is assigned a separate room so that conversations can be carried out in moderate privacy, and if the foundation of a deal is being laid, private meeting rooms are always available.

Two plenary sessions each day provide overviews of key areas of interest from senior figures, such as technology transfer, bioinformatics and genomics, and, very importantly, accessing global finance.

Now the organizers, Technology Vision Group, have developed an Internet site, the Global Biopartnering Network (GBNet). According to Dr Birgit Weskamp, a Partner in Technology Vision Group, “delegates have indicated the value of the BPE conference but tell us that once a year is not enough. The new web site will facilitate this flow of information all year round.” This sentiment is symbolized in the web site logo by ripples spreading out over water. All delegates to last year’s meeting were given password access to the site upon registration, as will each registered delegate for the 5th annual BioPartnering Europe, due to take place in London again this October. “Using GBNet’s advanced search capability, delegates are able to focus early on their strategic goals and prepare for productive private meetings in advance,” states Nancy Connelly, BPE Producer. Plans are under way to expand these services on a global scale with the first annual BioPartnering Asia conference being organized for spring 1998.

The site offers every registered company the opportunity to showcase their key characteristics, which include contact details with direct e-mail links, URL of company web sites, company profile, science & technology, commercialization strategy, financing plans, partnering goals, developmental programs, manufacturing capabilities, product opportunities and human resource assets. Jeremy Marshall, Information Manager for Technology Vision Group explains, “our aim is to create a product that is an industry standard, offering companies an efficient means of exchanging ideas and information as part of a package to create new international collaborations”.

Details of BioPartnering Europe are available from the Technology Vision Group (tel: +1 408 464 7100, fax: +1 408 464 4240, e-mail: bpe@techvision.com). The GBNet web site address is <http://www.biopartnering.com>.

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## SmithKline Beecham first BIA Patron

In his first act as Chairman of the Bio-Industry Association (BIA), Dr John Padfield (Chief Executive, Chiroscience Group plc, Cambridge, UK) opened the third Business for Bioscience meeting, held in London in November. He announced that SmithKline Beecham (SB) has become the first Patron of the Association, which exists to support the growing number of small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK through encouraging communication within the industry and through liaison with Government and

other organizations and institutions. SB spends more than £635 million a year on R&D, and according to Chairman of R&D, Dr George Poste, “The future success of major pharmaceutical companies will be augmented by collaboration with the emerging, innovative sector of new companies. SB’s patronage of the BIA demonstrates our commitment to supporting and encouraging this process.”

Former Chairman, Dr Keith McCullagh (Chief Executive, British Biotech, Oxford, UK) now represents the European

bioindustry as Vice Chairman of the EuropaBio. EuropaBio was formed in September and will represent some 500 companies and 8 national associations. McCullagh will support EuropaBio’s Chairman, Professor Jürgen Drews of Hoffman La Roche.

In the February issue of *Drug Discovery Today*, Professor Drews puts forward *Strategic choices facing the pharmaceutical industry: a case for innovation*.

*David Hughes*