

PRESS RELEASE

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New healthcare initiative could enhance the UK's position as a world leader in the diagnosis and treatment of disease

The Technology Strategy Board, together with the Department of Health, the Scottish Government Health Directorates, the Medical Research Council, Cancer Research UK and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is to bring the government, researchers and business together in a major initiative that will place the UK at the centre of a revolution in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

The new programme – called the Stratified Medicines Innovation Platform – will oversee an investment of over £50 million of government funding in innovative research and development in areas such as tumour profiling to improve cancer care and developing biomarkers for more effective drugs. The first competitions, worth up to £11 million, open in January 2011.

Speaking at the launch of the initiative at the Innovate10 networking and innovation event in London today, Universities and Science Minister David Willetts said:

"Tailoring medicines to patients is a key challenge for the \$750 billion global pharmaceutical market. The UK possesses many strengths needed to accelerate the innovation of stratified medicines and lead the world in developing medicines targeted at smaller subgroups of patients. Today I am announcing a major new collaborative programme to bring together the private sector, researchers and policymakers to achieve this vision and help to rebalance the economy."

The aim of the new Innovation Platform is to place the UK at the centre of a new era of molecular-based healthcare by catalysing the commercial application of new technologies for diagnosing and treating disease. This will provide business, health and economic benefits to the UK in a competitive global market. It will also help the pharma industry to develop an increased number of more effective drugs targeted at smaller patient groups, the diagnostics industry to develop further the companion diagnostic tests that underpin this, and the healthcare providers to improve their cost effectiveness.

Building on the UK's commercial and academic strengths, the assets of the National Health Service and the close liaison between research and policy, the Stratified Medicines Innovation Platform will focus initially on therapeutic areas that present a challenge to healthcare providers, are ready for a stratified approach and that provide a significant market opportunity.

Harpal Kumar, Chief Executive of Cancer Research UK, said:

"This is one of the most important programmes that Cancer Research UK has ever been involved in. We need to start work now to ensure that the NHS is ready to deal with the new generation of targeted treatments that are emerging. Through this project, we'll have a wealth of genetic information in two years that could be used to develop the personalised cancer drugs of the future. Most importantly, cancer patients will have access to the best possible technology to help determine which treatments are best for them."

Richard Barker, Director General of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) said:

"We have campaigned strongly for the UK to take a leadership role in this new era of personalised medicine, so we are absolutely delighted that the Technology Strategy Board is giving this initiative such strong support. The aim of Stratified (or Personalised) medicines is to use advanced life science technology to bring the right medicine to the right patient at the right time. This initiative will address some of the remaining barriers, such as co-development of medicines and companion diagnostics, to make this a reality for patients - here and around the world. It is a great example of the UK's vibrant life sciences sector pulling together to create growth strategies for Britain's future."

John Jeans, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council (MRC), said:

"The MRC welcomes news of this major new investment by the Technology Strategy Board. Targeting treatments to find out which patients are most likely to benefit is a key issue not just for patients but for the NHS and healthcare providers globally. Building on a joint initiative with the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries ABPI, the MRC is working with TSB on the stratification of treatments for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and rheumatoid arthritis and we look forward to extending this collaboration under the new Innovation Platform. Establishing how stratified treatments can best be developed and delivered is an important role for the innovative and world-leading UK biomedical research base, helping to make the UK the number one destination for industry investment."

The Innovation Platform will initially focus on two specific areas:

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- Tumour profiling in cancer, with an initial focus on breast, lung, colorectal, prostate, ovarian and skin cancers and associated technologies;
- Biomarker implementation to provide validated tests for predicting responses to marketed drugs, or drugs in development, in health conditions of clinical and commercial importance to the UK.

So far, the Technology Strategy Board has obtained agreement from the Department of Health (England), the Scottish Government Health Directorates, MRC, NICE and Cancer Research UK to partner in the programme.

The first research and development funding competitions managed by the Innovation Platform will open in January 2011. With total funding of over £11m from the Technology Strategy Board and its partners, these first competitions will focus on tumour profiling to improve cancer care, developing biomarkers for more effective drugs, and developing business models in stratified medicines.

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Notes to Editors

1. The Technology Strategy Board is a business-led executive non-departmental public body, established by the government. Its role is to promote and support research into, and development and exploitation of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business, in order to increase economic growth and improve the quality of life. It is sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). For more information please visit www.innovateuk.org.
2. *Innovate10: Connect for Growth* is taking place at the Business Design Centre in London on Tuesday 12 October. It is the leading networking and innovation event for businesses to meet other businesses, government and academia with the aim of making innovation happen – creating opportunity and growth for the future. Hosted by the Technology Strategy Board, Innovate10 will address all aspects of technology innovation, with a special focus on the commercial exploitation of the digital economy, healthcare markets of the future, energy generation and supply and the sustainability economy. For more information please visit: www.innovate10.co.uk
3. Molecular and genomic technologies have the potential to predict in advance, based on an understanding of the underlying disease mechanisms, which patients will respond positively to a given treatment. Identifying and grouping those patients likely to respond to a given treatment is termed *stratification*. **Stratified Medicine** could, therefore, be defined as the management of a group of patients using molecular diagnostic testing to select the optimum treatment to achieve the best therapeutic outcome for that group.
4. What is announced today is a five-year partnership programme to develop a series of activities at the national level to address the challenges of stratification for the benefit of business, healthcare providers and the wider economy.
5. The first investment comprises three funding competitions opening in January 2011:

Strand A: Tumour Profiling and Data Capture to Improve Cancer Care. Up to £5.6 million will be invested in collaborative research and development projects in the area of tumour profiling and data capture to inform cancer care by providing cancer specialists with information specific to the patient's tumour which will enable more targeted treatment to be provided. The commercial solutions from this competition will support the aims of Cancer Research UK's own Cancer Stratified Medicines (CSM) Programme which aims to demonstrate the benefit of routinely testing up to 6,000 tumour samples as a standardised, cost effective process. Cancer Research UK will organise the collection of samples from consenting patients over the next two years and collate their genetic and clinical data to inform research. For further information please visit: http://www.innovateuk.org/assets/pdf/Competition-Documents/briefs/tsb_StratmedTumourProfilingCompetition.pdf

Strand B: Developing Biomarkers for More Effective Drugs. Up to £4 million will be invested by the Technology Strategy Board and Medical Research Council (MRC) in collaborative research and development projects in developing biomarkers in the area of inflammation and immunology, where the UK has a strong clinical research base and the pharmaceutical industry has a vibrant development pipeline. The aim is to support the development and use of biomarkers to predict how groups of patients will respond to inflammation and immunology therapies. In this way therapies could be given only to relevant patient subgroups for better results in terms of alleviating symptoms and side effects. By incorporating biomarkers into clinical studies, businesses will be able to accelerate their new product or service developments and improve patient outcomes. For more information please visit: http://www.innovateuk.org/assets/pdf/Competition-Documents/briefs/tsb_StratmedDevelopingdrugscompetition.pdf

Strand C: Developing Business Models and Value Systems. Up to £1.5 million will be invested in collaborative research and development projects that aim to develop and adopt business models and value systems in stratified medicines. This competition is being developed in conjunction with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and will complement its medical technologies evaluation programmes. The competition aims to bring together diagnostics and pharmaceutical companies to determine the best ways to co-develop drugs and companion diagnostics, and the ways in which subsequent reimbursement can be distributed across the value chain. This should increase the number of stratified treatments that are developed, the speed of their development, and their adoption by healthcare providers. For further information please visit: http://www.innovateuk.org/assets/pdf/Competition-Documents/briefs/tsb_Stratmedbusinessmodelscompetition.pdf

6. The expected contributions of the Technology Strategy Board's partners in the Stratified Medicines Innovation Platform can be summarised as:

DH England will provide high level support to the programme, including through their policy working and investment in NHS research infrastructure.

MRC are to invest up to £15m in two UK academic/clinical/industry consortia in Inflammation and Immunology (COPD and RA) with a focus on biomarker discovery, biomarkers for risk prediction and drug discovery. This will align with the Innovation Platform, and with the roughly £10m per annum they invest more generally in biomarkers, trials methodology and patient cohorts research. MRC are also contributing £1.5 million to the first competition.

NICE will provide expertise and advice in business models and value systems, and will explore ways in which their Technology Assessment Programmes and Scientific Advisory Service can be included.

Cancer Research UK (and commercial partners) are developing a multi-million pound programme to collect samples from up to 6,000 consenting patients with breast, lung, colorectal, prostate, ovarian and skin cancer. They will undertake research on their tumours, including testing and banking tumour DNA, and electronic storage of their clinical data. They plan to make anonymised samples and data available to companies participating in Innovation Platform activities, as the development of better commercial testing and research products is essential to the success of the programme.

Scottish Government has a declared commitment to stratified medicines and will consider supporting the Innovation Platform through direct funding. They have already committed important and significant support for clinical research infrastructure including their sizeable DNA donor databank, the Generation Scotland programme, the Scottish Academic Sciences Health Collaboration and their electronic patient record system.

7. Media enquiries (only) should be addressed to the Technology Strategy Board's media relations manager or consultant.

8. Companies and other organisations seeking further information about funding competitions managed by the Technology Strategy Board should visit the competitions page of the Technology Strategy Board website – <http://www.innovateuk.org/competitions.ashx>, email support@innovateuk.org or phone the helpline on 0300 321 4357.

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