

BioTransR 2017 Meeting summary

MAASMECHELEN, BELGIUM, June 20, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ --

On 15 – 16th May the BioTransR conference, organised by the IMI funded project eTRIKS, took place in Barcelona. eTRIKS provides collaborative projects with advice, service, and a data management platform. It has supported over 60 projects in the past 4 ½ years.

eTRIKS members agree that we are facing a data tsunami and the complexity of medical science is increasing exponentially. We run the risk of not having enough expertise to make sense of all the data. So, now more than ever, there is an opportunity to engage translational researchers and clinicians in helping to make sense of that data.

Platforms and tools such as those built in eTRIKS allow for data visualisation and exploration without needing the technical knowledge of a data scientist. Of course, data scientists will always be needed to validate the analysis, but now translational researchers can help by sorting through the data and finding where the value lies.

BioTransR was conceived as a conference that would help to bring together data scientists and translational researchers. To this end, the conference held a series of discussions on the landscape of life sciences IT tools and infrastructures as well as talks focused more on the translational researcher, that emphasized case scenarios and how the tools are used.

The eTRIKS project has contributed significantly to the biomedical IT space with the development of data visualisation tools such as SMARTR (developed by the University of Luxembourg); a tool that enhances the efficiency of data curators in transforming data and applying standards in the eTRIKS harmonisation services (developed by Imperial College London); and tools to easily visualise and explore the complexity of disease networks (CNRS/EISBM). A novel cloud-based platform to host the above services and the associated data was designed and built as a proof of concept (CNRS/CC-IN2P3).

“I have never seen a public project produce such good software in so short of a timespan.”

- Yi-Ke Guo, Director of the Data Science Institute, Imperial College, London

The highlight of the meeting was a facilitated keynote discussion where the merits of making data open were poised against opening datasets only on the basis of collaboration. Prof. Dr. Alvar Agusti, (Hospital Clinic; CIBER) shook up the room by pointing out that there were no clinicians in the conference; yet the conversation was ultimately about treating patients better.

One of the only conferences of its kind, the meeting was a success. A total of 97% of survey respondents said they would attend another BioTransR meeting, and on a scale of 1-10 BioTransR received a score of 7.5 in terms of its value compared to other meetings attended in the past year. Joe Donahue, Managing Director Global Life Sciences R&D from Accenture, declared: “The quality of the presentations, discussions and attendance at the BioTransR 2017 conference reinforced the importance of increased collaboration amongst multiple organizations and stakeholders in the drug discovery ecosystem to achieve better outcomes for patients”.

A more detailed overview of the event and videos will be made available shortly through the [eTRIKS Data Science Network](#) (eDSN). “The idea is that this is just the beginning. We want as many people as possible to benefit from the high quality, perspective changing presentations that took place and are working hard to create a rich web based repository”, said Scott Wagers, CEO of BioSci Consulting an eTRIKS partner that organised BioTransR.

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