

focus on Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology Now: 17th Column

A report from NanoKTN

If UK nanotechnology expertise is going to be securely embedded in the global market, we need to ensure that UK SMEs are including international business development and collaboration in their sales and marketing plans.

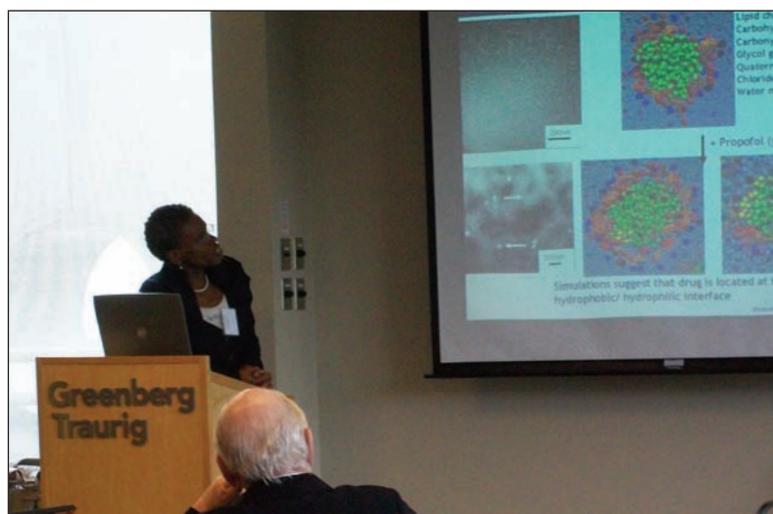


Figure 1. Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu, Chief Scientific Officer, Nanometrics Ltd.

Earlier this year, the Nanotechnology Knowledge Transfer Network (NanoKTN) and the Institute of Nanotechnology (IoN), with funding from the Technology Strategy Board, announced a partnership to encourage and support UK nanotechnology SMEs in international business development. This new collaboration saw the launch of the International NanoMicroClub (INMC), which provides UK SMEs with the opportunity to join missions to major international events.

The INMC provides a platform for UK micro and nanotechnology companies to network and engage internationally with global markets, previously inaccessible due to a lack of funding and resource. The NanoKTN and IoN believe this sort of framework of support in the early stages can make the difference between success and failure and is crucially important to the UK nanotechnology market.

The first of these missions saw five companies from the UK attend the BioPharm America 2010 Conference from the 15th to the 17th of September 2010 in Boston, USA. The mission provided each of the five companies with unique opportunities to develop business in nano-enabled pharmaceuticals. The companies selected to join the first Mission were world class fluid engineering research consultancy, BHR; drug discovery business, Conformetrix; European partner exchange and consultancy organisation, EuropaRx; nanomedicine pharmaceutical company, Nanometrics, and biotech start-up, Point-2-Point Genomics.

The aim of the US mission was to explore opportunities in the Boston, Massachusetts region, helping to assist UK bio-nanotech companies develop partnerships. This major networking opportunity highlighted the strengths of the nanotech cluster in the state of Massachusetts and brought the community together. It also provided a platform for the UK delegation to present their work in the bio nanotech field.

The mission saw an introduction to the National Cancer Institute, which provided an insight into the work the Institute carries out, looking at ways in which UK companies could get involved. A visit was also organised to the MIT-Harvard Center for Cancer Nanotechnology Excellence, where company representatives were given an introduction on the latest research and development work, providing an additional networking opportunity to look at future projects and collaborations.

To finish the mission, the group attended BioPharm America 2010, an annual partnering meeting organised by the EBD group. Held in Boston for the first time in collaboration with MassBIO, the conference also incorporated the MassBIO Investor Forum. The event was well attended and focussed mainly on organising partnering meetings but also included panel discussions, company presentations and a small exhibition. The conference saw over 900 international biotech and pharma representatives hold 2,580 one-to-one partnering meetings.

Attending BioPharm gave the companies the opportunity to meet with potential customers and opened up numerous new business opportunities that otherwise would not be open to them.

Commercial Director at Conformetrix, Gordon Barker, met with six major pharmaceutical companies, as well as a number of smaller biotech organisations and venture capitalists. Since the mission, Conformetrix has continued contact with each of these companies with a view to future collaboration.

Barker is looking to enter the market with strategic-level R&D collaborations rather than a straight CRO-type relationship and is aware that things take time, but since the mission, a number of key companies have shown interest in their marketing material and the company believes the mission was a success.

Ray Harrison, CEO at Point-2-Point Genomics also attended the mission and found it to be particularly valuable as it brought together top management officials from Boston, investors and multinational corporations. During the mission, the company was able to demonstrate how its multiplexing technology methodology might be deployed and how it could develop tests, using Point-2-Point Technology to identify any bacteria within two hours. Additionally a resistance to antibiotics profile using a similar approach in DNA analysis was showcased; as a result, Point-2-Point Genomics is currently developing fruitful relationships.



Figure 2. Dr Gordon Barker, Commercial Director, Conformetrix Ltd.

Although the mission was successful, business development is a long process and therefore the true value of any outcomes will not be seen for one to two years following the mission. However, early indications from the visit are positive and at least 5 NDAs have been signed and it is hoped one deal will be achieved over the coming months.



Figure 3. Dr Anita Peil, Director, EuropaRx Ltd.

Successful uptake of new technologies is vital to the wealth creating power of the UK and nanotechnology, applied across an array of different markets from life sciences to electronics, is expected to lead the way in delivering the UK's wealth creation over the next 20 years.

The NanoKTN supports the exploitation and commercialisation of micro and nanotechnologies (MNT) by informing, facilitating innovation and encouraging collaborations between suppliers and users, through events and missions like that held in Boston.

Becoming a member of the NanoKTN gives you access to the key companies and leading academics that work in the micro and nanotechnology field, as well as access to a broad range of benefits and services.

For further information on the UK MNT community and the NanoKTN, please visit www.nanoktn.com or email enquiries@nanoktn.com

Companies wishing to learn more about the INMC and its international missions should visit www.nanomicroclub.com