

Press Release for the 42nd Annual General Meeting of the PDR

The Pharma Documentation Ring (PDR) held its 42nd Annual General meeting (AGM) in Cheshire, UK from the 27th September to the 29th September 2000. The PDR is an association whose members represent the scientific information departments of the leading R&D-based pharmaceutical corporations. The 23 companies represented account for more than half of the total global turnover of ethical drugs.

This year's meeting, hosted by AstraZeneca, was attended by 43 delegates from 37 different sites in Europe and the US. Reflecting the considerable changes taking place in the industry, 25% of the delegates were attending for the first time. Barbara Obstoj of Marketletter hosted an informal reception for delegates prior to the official opening of the meeting.

There were two special themes to the meeting - Data Mining and Future Directions for the PDR. During the Data Mining session, Thérèse Vachon (Novartis) and Pierre Parisot (IBM) described the approach that had been taken in the development of the Novartis Knowledge Miner (NKM) tool and Andreas Persidis (Biovista) demonstrated the functionality of the Bio-Pathfinder tool and its use in analysing large quantities of competitor information. Both tools provided specialised capabilities for organising, retrieving, analysing and visualising information. It was clear that there is a growing interest within Pharmaceutical Companies in tools, which assist the extraction and visualisation of added value information from very large volumes of both internal proprietary information and external published information.

Company delegates reviewed the results from an internal questionnaire on Future Directions for the PDR. It was agreed that the activities of the PDR should be directed towards assisting members to react to the major changes that are taking place in the Pharmaceutical Industry and to help them respond effectively to the rate of technological development in the storage and retrieval of published and proprietary information. In a highly interactive session, several suggestions on how the PDR could evolve to meet these challenges were proposed by attendees and the PDR Board agreed to review the suggestions and present proposals for change back to the membership prior to the next AGM.

Other external speakers who gave presentations during the AGM included Johnathan de Pass (Evaluate), who in addition to describing the functionality of the Evaluate system ran an interesting computer simulation of the predicted outcome of a merger of two major Pharmaceutical Companies; Peter Steele (Current Patents), who described the content of the patent information sources from Current Drugs and Current Patents, including the latest addition – the Dolphin Database; and David Sommer (Blackwell Science), who gave an update on the CrossRef initiative.

A common theme to emerge from the PDR member company presentations was a move to more global operations with the majority of Companies establishing groups with global responsibility for the central negotiation of contracts with information vendors for access to online databases and electronic journals.

The work on the creation of a sample licence for electronic journals has continued and the PDR is pleased to report that, shortly after the AGM, agreement on the content of this important document has been reached with the Scientific Technical and Medical (STM) publishers.

The results of several PDR member surveys were presented and discussed. These surveys addressed topics as diverse as content management, electronic journals, end user training, information management, newsfeeds and the quality of external drug pipeline and other databases. The 43rd PDR AGM will be held on 3rd-5th October 2001, in Essex, England and will be hosted by Pfizer.

In summary, it was a highly successful meeting and a survey conducted amongst attendees indicated there had been a very high level of relevant and quality presentations by PDR members and invited speakers. An enthusiastic and individual approach to the different topics was strongly evident, helping to make these AGMs one of the annual highlights of the information scene in the pharmaceutical sector.

The PDR web site, launched in 1999, can be found at <http://www.p-d-r.com>.