

2024 Bio International Conference Meetings

Attended: Cindy Rivarde and Richelle Wilson

Monday, June 3rd

1. **Company:** PLABiologics Co.

Contacts: Minsun Kim – Marketing Manager, Jay Hahn – Research Director, Gi Jin Kim – CEO

Meeting Summary: PLA Biologics is a developer of therapeutic treatments intended to reverse the progression of degenerative diseases. The company's placenta-based therapies harness regenerative properties including growth factors and other bioactive molecules that promote tissue repair and possess immunomodulatory properties, which can be crucial for modulating immune responses, enabling doctors to replace or repair damaged cells, contributing to functional recovery. PLA Biologics is considering their expansion plan and wanted to discuss location options with REDI and MCEDC. Mr. Hahn lived in Gaithersburg previously, so they are interested in Rockville and Montgomery County.

2. **Company:** Genecraft

Contacts: Joel Ryoo – Senior Manager
Woo-Jin Kim – Patent Attorney

Meeting Summary: GeneCraft is a preclinical-stage biotech company based in South Korea dedicated to improving patient treatment and clinical outcomes through gene therapy that harnesses the innate oncogene defense system. Mr. Ryoo and Kim wanted to talk to MCEDC and REDI about expanding their clinical trials in the United States. So far, GeneCraft has raised \$10 million in South Korean won.

Currently, they are conducting preclinical trials in South Korea on AAV gene therapy for lungs and want to explore partnerships with hospitals, cancer centers, academic medical centers, or other research facilities that perform clinical trials. Genecraft informed us that the approval process closely mimics that within the US. REDI and MCEDC will provide information on hospitals conducting clinical trials and connections for workforce support and office space.

3. **Company:** Solaxa, Inc.

Contacts: Christian Walker – CEO and Founder, Luis Gutierrez – Chief Operating Officer

Meeting Summary: Solaxa, located in Bethesda, develops novel and reformulated drugs to restore nerve function. They are entering into Phase II trials for Ataxia. Luis is on the Tech Council's Venture Mentor program along with REDI staff.

Tuesday, June 4th

4. **Company:** City of Philadelphia Gov't

Contact: Rebecca Grant (Director, Life Sciences & Biotechnology)

Meeting Summary: Met with Ms. Grant to discuss programming focused on workforce development and increasing access to resources for entrepreneurs. Ms. Grant also mentioned a ranking for Top Cell & Gene hubs in the U.S. and that Philadelphia ranked number two behind Boston. The report was from a study commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia and compared cell and gene therapy hubs in research infrastructure, human capital, innovation output, commercial activity, and value proposition. Ms. Grant also shared that a new initiative called the Keystone LifeSci Collaborative (KLSC) was created. This program is focused on bolstering the growth of the region's life sciences sector and strengthening the industry's talent pipeline. Ms. Grant will follow up with the REDI team to connect them with the Ben Franklin Technology Partners team.

5. **Company:** Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

Contact: Jeanne LeClaire (Acting CEO of Massachusetts Life Science Center-MLSC)
Vidarthia Deonarin (Sr Manager of Economic Development & Partnerships)

Meeting Summary: The meeting consisted of Bill Tompkins (MCEDC), Lynne Benzion (MCEDC, Gabriella Ryan (MCEDC, Cindy Rivarde, Richelle Wilson, Jeanne LeClaire, and Vidarthia Deonarin. The REDI and MCEDC teams met with the MLSC team to discuss updates on their Massachusetts NextGen program and new workforce initiatives. Ms. LeClaire and Ms. Deonarin updated everyone on their newest program, Pathmaker. This program supports workforce development partnerships between training providers and life science companies to create new pathways. Ms. LeClair and Ms. Deonarin also discussed MLSC's Mass Next Gen grant program and how it helps them engage with the venture capital and investment community by having them participate on review panels.

6. **Company:** Cellphire

Contact: Mike Gaffney – CEO

Meeting Summary: Cellphire is a local Rockville business, and I spoke to the CEO about new initiatives at REDI, such as the Life Science Branding project. Mr. Gaffney

wants to follow up back in Rockville and introduce REDI to Robert Woods, his VP of Operations, to arrange an in-person visit in July.

7. **Company:** Astrid Pharma Corp.

Contact: Zach Ressaissi – Strategic Partnership Officer

Meeting Summary: Astrid Pharma is an early-stage biotech firm that pioneers the BioCapZ technology platform for safe and efficient drug delivery. It accommodates various drug classes, from small molecules to biologics. Astrid Pharma was recently accepted into programming at J Labs and needs to find lab space near the J Labs location in Washington D.C. Astrid has also been approved by BARDA for their capsid technology. Mr. Ressaissi will follow up with REDI and MCEDC to explore either a small lab space or incubator space within Rockville.

8. **Company:** Defense Health Agency

Contact: James E. McNerney, J.D. – Compliance Officer

Meeting Summary: DHA is located in Frederick. Mr. McNerney is in the Medical Technology Transfer office for Medical Research and Development Command at Fort Detrick. He suggested that REDI should come for a tour.

9. **Company:** Royale International

Contact: Scott Morson – Commercial Director

Meeting Summary: Royale International provides specialized transport services, especially for cell therapies that need special handling and fast delivery. REDI put them in touch with Astra Zeneca and Arcellx, both of whom have the need for fast T-cell transport.

Wednesday, June 5th

10. **Company:** Smart Labs

Contacts: Kelsey Kendzulak – Chief of Staff, Peter Genest – Director of Business Development

Meeting Summary: SmartLabs offers various space solutions for companies such as with 5-100 employees. It has a presence in other major life science hubs such as Boston, the Bay Area, and Philadelphia. SmartLabs is exploring new locations within Maryland and wants to discuss the county's interest in purchasing its modular systems to build lab space and offer other solutions. They are also interested in

providing expertise in operating a lab incubator, but they no longer want to take the rental risk for locations.

11. **Company:** M Biotechnology Inc.

Contact: Kazuhiro Matsuda - President

Meeting Summary: M Bio is an R&D company focused on mycoplasma infectious diseases (MID). Its patented technology helps detect the presence of antigens. M Bio is currently working on creating a MID Prism to better detect and monitor diseases. This research can be used for COVID-19, pneumonia, central nervous system (CNS) disorders, and heart disease. Currently, M Biotechnology has two core patents, and it is looking for business and production collaborations within the United States. Also looking to work with CROs or hospitals for clinical trials focused on supporting chronic diseases affecting children.

12. **Company:** BiologicDesign

Contact: Ronald Herbst – Chief Scientific Officer

Meeting Summary: BiologicDesign creates smarter drugs using molecular recognition to bind to targets – creating smart antibodies. They are now in phase II clinical trials. Their pipeline focuses on autoimmune diseases and immunoncology. Dr. Herbst indicated that they are looking for space in Montgomery County, so REDI will follow up.

13. **Company:** OmniSync

Contact: Caroline Arzoo - Director of Partnerships

Meeting Summary: Omnisync is a California-based tech business focused on supporting small businesses through various technology solutions. They provide support to businesses through their AI platform when applying for grants and SBIR funding. Ms. Arzoo proposed that REDI and MCEDC evaluate the platform to provide these additional services to their small business owners, particularly life science and technology businesses.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS MADE:

1. Joseph Conrad III – Senior Technology Transfer Manager for the National Cancer Institute at NIH (works with Michael Salgaller).

2. Ruchika Nijhara – Executive Director of the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund.
3. Thomas Ng – Director of Life Sciences/Corporate Partnerships for Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures.
4. Jerel Registre – new Chief of Staff for Secretary Kevin Anderson (Commerce).
5. Mei Sun – Portfolio Manager for US Army Military of Medicine Research Program.
6. James Sniezek PhD – Dean of Instruction Montgomery College.
7. Toni Guiriba – Associate Director of Corporate Strategy for Regenxbio.
8. Kelly Baggett – Innovation Coordinator for Fort Worth’s Economic Development Department.
9. Grace Festa – Director of biopharmaceuticals manufacturing for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.
10. Melissa Carter – Director of Policy and Public Affairs for Georgia Bio.
11. KJ Kulik – Scheer Partners.
12. Paul Schiffin – Sr Counsel – Millipore Sigma.
13. Carry Zhang – Global Head of Marketing for RoslinCT.