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OSDD to tap cheminformatics for novel drugs

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In pursuit of common aims and to raise awareness of the importance of Cheminformatics to accelerate the discovery of novel therapies for neglected diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and malaria, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), on January 29, 2013, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between its Open Source Drug Discovery (OSDD) initiative and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), the largest European organization for advancing chemical sciences in its headquarter here in New Delhi.

The MoU, spanning three years, aims to address the objective of finding novel, faster-acting, and more effective regimens for TB and Malaria by advancing the discipline of Cheminformatics. The collaboration envisions conducting workshops and conferences to build links between experts and leaders in the coming years and will focus on jointly building an online repository of real and virtual molecular structures along with developing free-to -use software tools for drug discovery and development. The partnership also aims at exploring the possibility of advancing OSDD's e-learning program for students.

Speaking on the occasion, union minister for science and technology, S Jaipal Reddy, said: "The RSC has undoubted strength in the field of chemistry. This strength will now be coupled with the strengths of the OSDD programme, deployed to improve the innovation for neglected diseases."

Reddy also stressed the importance of scientific institutions to work towards finding solutions for problems that predominantly affect the poorer sections of the society, like the need for new drugs for Tuberculosis, Malaria and Kala-Azar (Leishmaniasis).

Prof. Samir K Brahmachari, director general, CSIR and chief mentor OSDD, also underlined the importance of this collaboration for finding new drugs for neglected diseases like tuberculosis (TB). He said "What we cannot do alone, we with complementary skills, need to work together. Finding new drugs for TB is a major challenge. We are joining hands to find New Chemical Entities which could be potential anti-TB drugs."

The RSC's immediate past president, David Phillips, who was in India to announce the MoU said: "Through this agreement, the CSIR and RSC are responding to the challenge of 'lost data' - that is the 90% of research output that never gets published.He said "That data, that information, that knowledge, is lost to society. But it has enormous value to the chemical science research community and by using new tools and new disciplines, like Cheminformatics or e-Science, we can recapture that lost information. The importance of Cheminformatics in addressing this challenge cannot be underestimated."