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Linux for drugs

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Held at Castle Rauischholzhausen in Germany, the OSP conference brought together researchers, NGOs, industry professionals, philanthropists and entrepreneurs who aim to create better, cheaper, and faster ways to bring novel therapeutics to market.

Open Source Pharma (OSP) is a concept inspired by the Linux model of operation.

In brief, crowdsourced, computer-driven drug discovery; IT-enabled clinical trials with open data; and generics manufacture.

In four words, Open Source Pharma is "affordable medicine for all." In three words it is,"Linux for drugs."

Adapted to tackling important public health challenges, it hopes to catalyze radical change in the way we do medical R&D and deliver better and more affordable innovation quicker and cheaper to patients.

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This year's conference was a follow-up to the first global Open Source Pharma Conference, held at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center, Lake Como, Italy in 2014, where participants adopted a joint mission statement for the movement.

In addition to Tata Trusts, the conference included participants from MÃ?Â©decins Sans FrontiÃ?Â¨res, Open Source Drug Discovery (OSDD), Sanofi Aventis, Open Source Malaria, the Open Society Foundations, the Structural Genomics Consortium, INSERM, Oxford University, Philipps-University Marburg, Paris Descartes University, McGill University, FasterCures - a center of the Milken Institute, Transparency Life Sciences, Taros Chemicals, Center for Research and Interdisciplinarity (CRI), Germany's House of Pharma, Gesmer Updegrove LLP, Cures within Reach, Medicines for Malaria Venture, and the Foundation for Neglected Disease Research, and has previously included participants from the WHO/TDR, other large pharmaceutical companies, and several national governments.

Mr Jaykumar Menon, convener, Open Source Pharma Foundation, said, "Our vision is to provide affordable medicine for all. We aim to support a growing open source pharma movement that includes existing initiatives to create a comprehensive and alternative open source pharmaceutical system driven by principles of openness, patient need, and affordability. It will systematically address bottlenecks in the pharmaceutical development pipeline by applying open source techniques wherever applicable. This covers all stages, from policy or political will to discovery, development, manufacturing, distribution, and use. Open Source Pharma bends the energies of the universe towards bugs that affect billions. With enough eyes, all bugs are shallow."

In India, the Open Source Pharma Foundation's initial projects include India's first Product Development Partnership (PDP), led by Dr Tanjore Balganesh, the former head of Astra Zeneca India, and will focus on the rapid development of breakthrough medicines, including renewed efforts to develop effective therapies to roll back the tuberculosis epidemic, which kills nearly 1.5 million patients a year, making it the most lethal infectious disease globally after HIV/AIDS.

Other activities include public outreach, education initiatives including open source research fellowships, and global crowdsourced science. Advisory Board members include Bernard Munos (FasterCures/Forbes blogger), Matthew Todd (The University of Sydney/Founder of Open Source Malaria).

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Mr Ganesh Neelam, development manager, Tata Trusts said, "Tata Trusts shares the vision to deliver affordable medicines for patients across the world and especially in developing countries. We are confident that within five years, our co-partnership with the Open Source Pharma Foundation will enable innovative breakthroughs in cost-effectively treating the most pressing diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria. We have been one of the first supporters of this initiative and are fully committed to making a real difference in this area."

Tata Trusts are amongst India's oldest, non-sectarian philanthropic organizations.

Tata Trusts seek to be catalysts in development through giving grants to institutions in the areas of Natural Resources Management, Rural Livelihoods, Urban Livelihoods & Poverty, Education, Enhancing Civil Society and Governance, Health, and Media Arts, Crafts and Culture.