

Massachusetts-South Africa Conference on Global Innovation and Technology Transfer
Stellenbosch, South Africa
June 8-11, 2015

The first Massachusetts-South Africa Conference on Global Innovation and Technology Transfer was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, on June 8-11, 2015. The conference is an outcome of the 2013 Massachusetts-South Africa Technology (M-SAT) Fellowship Program, an initiative of South Africa Partners and Bentley University with funding from the U.S. Department of State Professional Fellows Program. The four Fellows co-chairing the conference include: Dr. Erika Bechtold, Senior Licensing Associate at the Tufts University Office of Technology Transfer and Industry Collaboration; Dr. Janine Chantson, Senior Technology Transfer Manager at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Licensing & Ventures office; Dr. Douglas Sanyahumbi, Director at the University of Western Cape's Technology Transfer Office; and, Michael Pratt, Director of Business Development at the Boston University Office for Technology Development.

The theme for the conference was *Translating Scientific Discoveries into Commercial Products for Infectious Disease Diagnosis and Management*. Specifically, the conference program emphasized translational scientific efforts in the fields of tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS and neglected tropical disease.

Due to the innovation and translational focus and the need for enhanced engagement and networking amongst participants, conference attendance was by invitation-only. The conference hosted 41 delegates with participants including bioentrepreneurs, bioinformaticians, biologists, biomedical engineers, chemists, clinicians, entrepreneurs, funders, a mathematician, a veterinarian and pathologist, and an architect.



The first two days of the conference focused on translational research outputs: new drugs, diagnostics, or platform technologies for diagnosing or managing infectious diseases. The third day's sessions allowed for entrepreneurs to share their experiences of starting a new venture in the infectious diseases space. Representatives of the funding agencies Department of Science and Technology, Medical Research Council (MRC), Strategic Health Innovation Partnerships (SHIP) and PATH were invited to discuss opportunities for collaboration and current funding trends.

The conference provided an excellent platform for networking and for the delegates to identify and discuss areas of mutual interest and opportunities for longer-term translational research collaborations and partnerships. This was achieved not only through the conference proceedings, but also through the social events including a Welcome Reception and Dinner.

Funding support for the Conference, from the Department of Science and Technology (South Africa), Tufts University and Spoor & Fischer, is gratefully acknowledged.

The organizers hope to consider hosting a similar conference in Boston, Massachusetts. This decision will be influenced by the outcomes from this conference and feedback from the participants.