SCS
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SWISS CHEMICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Call for Nominations for the SCS Awards 2018

As one of our four strategic pillars, SCS awards excellence in science and chemistry respectively and is proud of its renowned award program that goes back to the age of 1936 with the ceremony of the first Werner Prizes to Dr. T. Posternak, Genève, and Prof. G. Schwarzenbach, Zürich.

The society hereby calls for nominations for the 2018 SCS Awards. Nominations have to be submitted electronically to info@scg.ch. The deadline for all documents to reach the Swiss Chemical Society is September 30, 2017.

For specific award information and required documents please visit our website *http://scg.ch/award*s

Paracelsus Prize

CHF 20,000 and medal in gold

The Paracelsus Prize is awarded to an internationally outstanding scientist for his or her lifetime achievements in chemical research. It is awarded every two years.

Werner Prize

CHF 10'000 and medal in bronze

The Werner Prize is awarded to a promising young Swiss scientist or scientist working in Switzerland for outstanding independent chemical research. At the time of the nomination deadline the candidate ought not to be older than 40 years and may not be a tenured professor or someone holding a managerial position in industry. The prize is awarded annually.

Balmer Prize

CHF 2'000 for individuals and CHF 2'000 for the school's chemistry department or CHF 3'000 for a group and CHF 1'000 for the school's chemistry department and medal in bronze.

The Balmer Prize is awarded to a teacher working in Switzerland at high school (gymnasium) level for innovation in chemistry teaching. The innovation must be easily applicable in current teaching and the costs for materials must be modest. The candidate may not make any claim to copyright in the innovation. The prize is awarded annually.

Dr. Max Lüthi Award

CHF 1'000 and medal in bronze

The Dr. Max Lüthi Award is presented for an outstanding diploma thesis in Chemistry conducted at a Swiss University of Applied Sciences. Nominations must be submitted by the head of the Chemistry Department of a Swiss University of Applied Sciences. The prize is awarded annually.

Sandmeyer Award

CHF 10'000 for individuals or CHF 20'000 for groups

The Sandmeyer Prize is awarded to a person – excluding tenured professors – or to a group for outstanding work in industrial or applied chemistry. The work must be completed in Switzerland or with the involvement of a Swiss national. The prize is awarded annually and supported by the Division of Industrial and Applied Chemistry of the SCS.

KGF/SCS Industrial Science Awards

The KGF/SCS Industrial Scientific Awards are given to scientists working in Switzerland that are still working in industrial R&D.

Industrial Investigator Award

Certificate and cash check of CHF 7'000

The award honors successful investigators with outstanding achievements.

Senior Industrial Investigator Award

Certificate and cash check of CHF 10'000

The award onors very successful and established investigators with outstanding achievements over
many years.

Distinguished Industrial Investigator Award

Certificate and cash check of CHF 15'000

Rewarded only on decision by the board

The award honors senior scientists on the top of their research career for their lifetime achievements.

SCS Awards are sponsored and supported by the KGF

KontaktGruppe für Forschungsfragen
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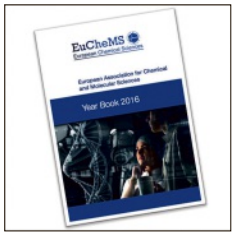
BASF NOVARTIS Roche syngenta

Welcome to the EuCheMS 2016 Yearbook!



2016 has been an exciting and busy year. The high point has to be the 6th EuCheMS Chemistry Congress (ECC) in Seville, which attracted around 2000 people from all over Europe and beyond. Peter Edwards (Chair of the Scientific Committee) and Carlos Negro (Chair of the Local Organising Committee) contrived to put on a spectacular celebration of Chemistry in the wonderful FIBES Conference Centre on the outskirts of the exhilarating city of Seville. The scientific programme started with one Nobel Prize Winner, Dick Schrock, wound its way through all areas of chemistry, beautifully ex-

plained, and nished with Ben Feringa giving a delightful exposition of molecular machines, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry only a few weeks later, along with Jean-Pierre Sauvage and Sir Fraser Stoddart, three Europeans, two of them still working in Europe. The social programme was also spectacular with a delightful tour of the Alcazar by the light of the (almost) full moon.
David Cole-Hamilton President, EuCheMS
Source: *http://www.euchems.eu/*

Chemie in unserer Zeit (ChiuZ) für Schulen

Die Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker, GDCh, in Zusammenarbeit mit Wiley-VCH öffnet jetzt einen neuen Weg für Schüler und Lehrer und wird für drei Jahre ihre Zeitschrift "Chemie in unserer Zeit", ChiuZ, für Schulen kostenfrei elektronisch zur Verfügung stellen.

"Schüler und Lehrer waren schon immer im Fokus der ChiuZ und daher freut es mich besonders, dass wir nun gemeinsam mit Wiley-VCH allen interessierten Schulen einen kostenfreien Online-Zugang anbieten können. Alle Mitglieder einer Schule können so nun jederzeit über PC, Tablet und Smartphone auf die fundierten Inhalte leicht zugreifen und sie somit unmittelbar im Unterricht, für Vorträge, Facharbeiten und natürlich auch darüber hinaus lesen!", so Wolfram Koch, Geschäftsführer der GDCh. Thisbe Lindhorst, derzeitige GDCh-Präsidentin, will mit diesem Projekt zudem die Entscheidungskompetenz der Schüler und Lehrer bezüglich chemischer Sachverhalte stärken: "An chemischer Bildung muss uns allen gelegen sein, denn allein Bildung führt zu immer neuen Anfängen und macht uns Menschen zu Verantwortlichen ihrer Zeit."

Der Fonds der Chemischen Industrie (FCI) begrüsst die Initiative und unterstützt die Massnahme der GDCh.

Interessierte Schulen können sich ab sofort unter der E-Mail-Adresse chiuz-schule@wiley-vch.de formlos anmelden. Die Inhalte werden zum Beginn des Jahres 2017 für alle teilnehmenden Schulen freigeschaltet.
Online-Zugang: https://application.wiley-vch.de/util/schule/

1. Platz für Schweizer Nachhaltigkeitspreis für Wasserkioske in Uganda

Das Schweizer Nachhaltigkeitsforum eco.ch hat am 31. März 2017 das Projekt «Gravit'eau» der Hochschule für Life Sciences FHNW und der Eawag mit dem Hauptpreis des prix eco.ch 2017 ausgezeichnet.

Der aus Verbänden, Institutionen und Behörden aus dem Bereich Nachhaltigkeit zusammengesetzte Verein eco.ch belohnte mit dem prix eco.ch zum achten Mal das Engagement von Einzelpersonen und Organisationen, die sich für eine lebenswerte und nachhaltige Zukunft einsetzen. Dieses Jahr überzeugte das Projekt Gravit'eau der Hochschule für Life Sciences FHNW (HLS) und Eawag – vorgestellt von Maryna Peter der HLS, Abteilung Siedlungshygiene und Wasser für Entwicklung – in einer dreiminütigen Pitch-Präsentation die Fachjury und gewann den Hauptpreis für herausragende Leistungen und den Beitrag zu einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung.

Hauptpreis für autarke Wasserkioske in Uganda

Die autarken Wasserkioske von Gravit'eau in Uganda für Schulen, Dörfer oder Gesundheitszentren reinigen Wasser mit schwerkraftgetriebener Membranfiltration. Der Betrieb braucht sehr wenig Unterhalt, ist einfach, günstig und robust. Mit der Technologie können Bakterien, Viren und Protozoen aus trübem Wasser entfernt werden. Damit eignet sich der Kioskbetrieb insbesondere für abgelegene ländliche Gebiete in Entwicklungsländern oder in städtischen Slums. Das Projekt ist nicht nur wegen der eingesetzten Technik nachhaltig, sondern auch, weil es lokal verankert ist und ein ganzes Businessmodell dahintersteckt. Gravit'eau ist ein gemeinsames Projekt der Hochschule für Life Sciences FHNW und Eawag.

Der Schweizer Nachhaltigkeitspreis prix eco.ch ist mit 15'000 Franken projektbezogener Förderung von Swiss Bluetec Bridge und der Teilnahme am cewas Start-up-Programm im Wert von 5'000 Franken dotiert.
Quelle: *http://www.eco.ch*

Medaillen für junge Chemie-Talente

Sie sind jung, finden Labormantel und Schutzbrille cool und haben ein Talent für Chemie. Vom 17. bis 22. April 2017 trafen sich Mittelschülerinnen und Mittelschüler aus der ganzen Schweiz an der ETH Zürich zum Final der Schweizer Chemie-Olympiade 2017. Zwölf Jugendliche gewannen eine Medaille. Für die vier Gewinner geht das Olympiafieber im Juli an der Internationalen Chemie-Olympiade in Thailand weiter.

Am Morgen zogen sie mit Schreibzeug und Taschenrechner in den Theorieunterricht, am Nachmittag ging es mit Schutzbrille und Mantel ab in die Chemielabors der ETH Zürich. Eine ganze Woche lang beschäftigten sich die neun Finalisten und sieben Finalistinnen der Schweizer Chemie-Olympiade mit ihrem Lieblingsfach. Am Freitag, 21. April, galt es dann ernst. Bei der dreistündigen Theorieprüfung und der zweistündigen Praktika-Prüfung wetteiferten die Jugendlichen um Medaillen.

Gold für zwei Berufsschüler und zwei Gymnasiasten

Am erfolgreichsten abgeschnitten haben Diego Zenhäusern aus Bürchen (Berufsfachschule Oberwallis), Tamar Som aus Lengnau (Kantonsschule Baden), Caroline Weber aus Schnottwil (Kantonsschule Solothurn) und Luca Schmutz aus Waldkirch (Berufsschule aprentas). Diego Zenhäusern, der eine Lehre als Chemielaborant absolviert, zeigte sich überrascht über seinen ersten Platz: „Ich habe nicht damit gerechnet, dass ich in der Theorie so gut abschneide." Auf die Frage, was ihn an Chemie fasziniere, meint er begeistert: „Mir gefällt, dass aus zwei unterschiedlichen Stoffen etwas ganz Neues entstehen kann. Und dass man mit dieser Wissenschaft so viele Phänomene aus unserem Alltag erklären kann."

Über Silber freuten sich Richard Walter aus Luzern (Kantonsschule Alpenquai Luzern), Gian Reber aus Solothurn (Kantonsschule Solothurn), Ambika Mukherjee aus Untersiggenthal (Kantonsschule Baden) und Chantal Balmer aus Aeschi (Kantonsschule Solothurn).

Die Bronzemedaillen gingen an Simone Heimgartner aus Fislisbach (Kantonsschule Baden), Simon Bolt aus Windisch (Kantonsschule Wettingen), Nikola Hajdin aus Zürich (Kantonsschule Hohe Promenade) und Stefanie Bauer aus Zumikon (Kantonsschule Hohe Promenade). Vier weitere Schüler wurden mit einer Honorable Mention ausgezeichnet.

Die 16 Finalistinnen und Finalisten setzten sich gegen ihre ehemals 312 Mitstreiter durch und überzeugten mit ihrem Wissen, ihren Fertigkeiten und ihrer Neugierde bereits in den ersten beiden Runden der Olympiade im Oktober und Januar. Sie gehören zu den besten Nachwuchs-Chemikern der Schweiz.

Thailand wird zum Treffpunkt von Chemie-Talenten aus aller Welt

Die vier Goldmedaillengewinner dürfen die Schweiz an der Internationalen Chemie-Olympiade vom 6. bis 15. Juli 2017 in Nakhon Pathom (Thailand) vertreten. Caroline Weber freut sich auf die Reise nach Asien: „Besonders gespannt bin ich auf die Jugendlichen aus aller Welt. Es ist interessiert mich, zu erfahren, wie ihr Chemieunterricht aussieht, ob sie andere Themen beackern als wir in der Schweiz." Nebst den beiden Prüfungstagen haben die Jugendlichen auch die Gelegenheit, das Gastland zu entdecken. Denn nebst der intellektuellen Herausforderung legen die Wissenschafts-Olympiaden auch grossen Wert auf den interkulturellen Austausch unter den Jugendlichen. Es werden fachliche und persönliche Kontakte geknüpft, die den beruflichen Werdegang der Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer positiv prägen.

Die Freiwilligenarbeit, das Herzstück der Wissenschafts-Olympiaden

Organisiert wird der Wettbewerb für kluge Köpfe vom Verein SwissChO (Schweizer Chemie-Olympiade). SwissChO, das sind Studierende, Doktorierende oder Lehrpersonen, die oft selbst an den Olympiaden mitgemacht haben und nun ihr Wissen und ihre Leidenschaft für das Fach an die jüngeren Schüler weitergeben. Sie leisten damit wichtige Freiwilligenarbeit in der wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchsförderung.

- www.olympiads.ch – Verband Schweizer Wissenschafts-Olympiaden
- www.swisscho.ch – Schweizer Chemie-Olympiade SwissChO
- www.icho2017.sc.mahidol.ac.th – International Chemistry Olympiad IChO 2017

Schweizer Chemie-Olympiade SwissChO

Die Schweizer Chemie-Olympiade (SwissChO) ist ein Wettbewerb für Jugendliche aus der Schweiz und dem Fürstentum Liechtenstein. Das Ziel der Olympiade ist es, die Mittelschülerinnen und Mittelschüler zu fördern und sie für Chemie zu faszinieren. Der nationale Wettbewerb findet bereits zum 30. Mal statt und wird in drei Runden durchgeführt. In der ersten Runde absolvieren interessierte Jugendliche einen Multiple-Choice-Test. 2017 nahmen 312 Schülerinnen und Schüler an der ersten Runde teil. Die besten 56 Jugendlichen qualifizierten sich für die zweite Runde, die Zentralprüfung an der Universität Bern. Die 16 Besten schaffen es in die dritte Runde. Diese besteht aus zwei Workshops und der Finalwoche an den ETHs Zürich und Lausanne. Nach der Finalprüfung stehen die Gewinnerinnen und Gewinner der Olympiade fest. Die vier besten Jugendlichen holen sich das Ticket für die Internationale Chemie-Olympiade IChO. Die 49. IChO findet dieses Jahr vom 6. bis 15. Juli 2017 in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, statt.

Der Verein SwissChO organisiert die Ausscheidung, das Training und die Begleitung der Schweizer und liechtensteinischen Delegationen ins Ausland an die IChO in ehrenamtlicher Arbeit. Die SwissChO ist Mitglied im Verband Schweizer Wissenschafts-Olympiaden und dadurch in stetem Austausch mit den Olympiaden in Biologie, Geografie, Informatik, Mathematik, Philosophie und Physik.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members!

Period: 25.03.2017 – 28.04.2017

Andreas Beil, Oberengstringen - Simone Bertini, Bern - Hélène Beucher, Zurich - Christian Bold, Gipf-Oberfrick - Andreas Brändle, Zürich - Alessandro Castrogiovanni, Basel - Seemon Coomar, Untersiggenthal - Jyoti Dhankhar, Zürich - Claus Dittel, Allschwil - Myriem El Qacemi, Basel - Anne-Cecile Ferahian, Fribourg - Michele Garbo, Genève - Andrés Garcia-Dominguez, Zürich - Erica Giraldi, Vevey - Christopher P. Gordon, Zürich - Kajita Harutake, Oberengstringen - Shahryar Jabrallah, Sheffield (UK) - Pascal Jurt, Sempach-Station - Jingguo Li, Zürich - Yangbin Liu, Petit-Lancy - Philipp Melle, Zollikofen - Nora Nowak, Zurich - Raphael Oeschger, Ringgenberg - Eno Paenurk, Zürich - Maryta Piatrushyna, Langnau i.E - Erik Schrader, Zürich - Abdusalom Suleymanov, Chavannes-près-Renens - Luca Szabo, Lausanne - Esther Tschanen, Bassersdorf - Dominic Tscherrig, Bern - Marta Valencia, Bern - Reto Witzig, Basel - Bouthayna Zilate, Basel.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Werner Prize 2017 awarded to Kevin Sivula, EPFL, and Christof Sparr, Uni Basel

On the occasion of the SCS Spring Meeting dinner, Alain De Mesmaeker, SCS President, and Christian Bochet, SCS Vice-President, awarded the Werner Prize 2017 to Prof. Christof Sparr and Prof. Kevin Sivula for their outstanding research achievements in their still young career. We like to take the opportunity to congratulate them again and wish all the best for their upcoming research projects.

The ceremony took place in the restaurant Casino in Bern on April 20 and the lectures were part of the program of the SCS Spring Meeting 2017.

The SCS awards the Werner Prize 2017 to

Prof. Kevin Sivula, EPF Lausanne, for his significant contributions to the advancement of materials and methods for photoelectrochemical energy conversion

and to

Prof. Christof Sparr, University of Basel, in recognition of his very creative contributions to the asymmetric synthesis of single atropisomers of hindered aromatic compounds using organocatalysis.
Source: *https://scg.ch*

Michael Grätzel, EPF Lausanne, wins Global Energy Prize

Professor Michael Grätzel, director of EPFL's Laboratory of Photonics and Interfaces, is being honored for "transcendent merits in development of low cost and efficient solar cells, known as 'Grätzel cells'", for which Grätzel is world-famous. The cells aim at creating cost-efficient, large-scale engineering solutions for power generation, as they have proven to be much cheaper and easier to manufacture compared to other photovoltaic cells. Grätzel's lab has been consistently improving their stability and efficiency, while also carrying out research in energy- and electron-transfer reactions in mesoscopic systems in the context of solar electricity and fuels.

The Global Energy Prize has been awarded since 2003 by The Global Energy Association (Moscow), and with the support of three leading Russian energy companies: Gazprom, Surgutneftegas and the Federal Grid Company of Unified Energy System. It is presented annually in St Petersburg by the President of the Russian Federation, and winners receive an amount of 39 million rubles (~695,000 Swiss francs).

So far, the award has been given to 34 scientists and researchers around the world who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in their respective fields. The particular focus of the Prize is research and technology in energy, and it highlights leading scientific work that pushes the boundaries of important research but also pursues the interests of humanity.
Source *:http://www.globalenergyprize.org/en/laureates/2017*

Prof. Maksym Kovalenko's research under the Top 5 at the 2017 Spark Award

Wtih a new energy storage technology, the team of ***Prof. Maksym Kovalenko***, ETH Zurich, reached the top 5 finalists for the Spark Award 2017. They created a new technology using graphite flakes as cathode material in rechargeable aluminium chloride-graphite batteries.

On 28 March 2017 the Spark Award was given out again for the most promising invention of 2016 that was filed for a patent. Prof. Maksym V. Kovalenko, Dr. Kostiantyn V. Kravchyk, and Shutao Wang were among the top 5 nominees for a new rechargeable aluminium chloride-graphite battery with high energy density and long cycling life for stationary storage.
Source: *https://www.chab.ethz.ch/en/news-and-events*

Prof. Greta Patzke, University of Zürich, wins the Credit Swiss Award for Best Teaching 2017

"Chemistry is my mission" says ***Prof. Greta Patzke***. And she knows how to convey her enthusiasm to her students and how to inspire them to work on their own. That is why the UZH awarded Greta Patzke with the Lehrpreis 2017.

The Credit Swiss Award for Best Teaching was granted for the first time in 2007. The award is designed to highlight what makes teaching effective and is awarded each year on the basis of a different aspect of excellence in teaching. The way how Greta Patzke teaches, and the way how she shows her enthusiasm and her passion for chemistry persuaded her students. She manages to stimulate the students to ask questions beyond the subject material, to link the different subject material and to connect them with economical and political facts.
Source: *http://www.chem.uzh.ch/en/research/news*

Mauro del Ben and Ralph Koitz, University of Zurich, awarded with the IBM Research Prize

The 2016 IBM Forschungspreis was awarded to equal parts to ***Mauro del Ben*** and ***Ralph Koitz*** of the University of Zurich for their PhD theses entitled "Efficient Non-Local Dynamical Electron Correlation for Condensed Matter Simulations" and "Functional Two-Dimensional Materials: A Computational Study of Complex Processes at Interfaces". They both were member of the research group of Prof. Jürg Hutter.

Dr. Mauro del Ben was awarded the IBM Research Forschungspreis for the development and implementation of a periodic Gaussian and Plane Wave based MP2 and RPA method for the computation of the energy and structure of condensed matter systems. The program code was tested in simulations of ice and

water; the method presented is generally applicable and, given the treatment of electron correlation and the efficiency of the implementation, will open the door to a new category of problems.

Dr. Ralph Koitz was awarded the IBM Research Forschungspreis for his DFT based *ab initio* molecular dynamics simulations of the structure and properties of two-dimensional networks (boron-nitride; tris-terpyridine) supported either by a rigid (metal) or soft surface (air-water interface). These simulations, performed in close collaboration with experiment, helped to advance the understanding of the dynamics and functionality of these nano-systems.

The two laureates received their awards at the Dies Academicus of the University of Zurich on April 29, 2017.
Source: *http://www.c4.ethz.ch/prize.html*

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

Source: *www.chemmanager-online.com*

J&J Calls Actelion Tender Offer Successful

April 4, 2017: Based on interim results of its $280 per share tender offer for all publicly held shares of Swiss biopharmaceuticals company Actelion, US healthcare giant Johnson & Johnson has declared the offer carried out through its Swiss subsidiary Janssen Holding a success. The main offer period ended on March 30, with 73.25% of the 107,339,642 shares covered by the offer tendered. Altogether, shares corresponding to 77.20% of the voting rights and the share capital of Actelion are now held by New Jersey-based J&J. The additional acceptance period of ten trading days on the Swiss stock exchange SIX will begin on April 6 and expire on April 21, the company said. J&J has announced also that the applicable waiting periods under the amended Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act of 1976 with respect to the proposed acquisition have either expired or been terminated early. The Japan Fair Trade Commission and the Israeli Antitrust Authority have already cleared the deal, which is expected to close in the second quarter following all approvals. A prerequisite for the acquisition to go ahead was that 67% of share capital agreed to tender. Previously announced terms call for Actelion to spin off its drug discovery operations and early-stage clinical development assets into a newly created Swiss biopharmaceutical firm called Idorsia and headed by Actelion founder Jean-Pierre Garnier as CEO. Shares in Idorsia are to be distributed to Actelion's shareholders as a dividend. J&J will initially take a minority stake of 16% in the research spinoff, with the right to acquire an additional 16% later, through a convertible note.

Syngenta-ChemChina Deal Clears US and EU

April 6, 2017: Within two days, one of the three mega mergers influencing in major part the agrochemicals sector moved two steps closer to becoming reality. On April 4–5, the US Federal Trade Commission, followed by the European Commission, greenlighted ChemChina's $43 billion acquisition of Switzerland's Syngenta. As a condition for US approval, ChemChina agreed to divest several products made by its Israel-based subsidiary Adama Agricultural Solutions, which focuses on generic versions of crop protection agents. American Vanguard (AMVAC) is picking up all rights and assets to Adama's paraquat herbicide. The California company is also set to acquire Adama's business with abamectin, an insecticide used in citrus and nut production, as well as the chlorothalonil fungicide, used to protect peanuts and potatoes. Syngenta sells branded versions of all three products. In exchange for EU approval, ChemChina will sell "a significant part" of its Adama unit's crop protection business including fungicides, herbicides, insecticides and seed-treatment products, as well as divesting 29 of Adama's generic pesticides under development and a part of Adama's plant growth regulator for cereals, along with related assets and personnel. Syngenta will also divest some of its own crop protectants, including fungicides and herbicides that the Swiss company – world's largest player in this segment – said are not material to its business. Announcing the deal's clearance, EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said the "significant remedies" offered by ChemChina "fully address our competition concerns." The Chinese-Swiss deal affects the same types of markets as the Dow and DuPont transaction, but the two transitions are "quite different," she said. As Adama is not active in the research and development of new crop protectants, the Commission did not have the same concerns about loss of competition among innovators as in the Dow-DuPont merger. China's largest cross-border acquisition is expected to close by the end of the second quarter. Approvals are still out in China, India and Mexico. Reports said, however, that there are no significant overlaps in India. Chinese authorities are expected to easily nod off on the transaction. Syngenta CEO Erik Fyrwald stressed that the Swiss agrochemicals giant will remain independent, though representatives of the new owner will take seats on its supervisory board. The US company is said to be paying more than 21 times Actelion's estimated 2020 per-share earnings, which has led some analysts to declare the takeover too expensive. The transaction is taking place under the shadow of a proposal by the new US administration to rewrite the US tax code to induce American companies to repatriate untaxed offshore funds at reduced rates. Earlier reports suggested that J&J may hold as much as $42 billion in cash overseas.

Novartis Takes Rights to Lubris Eye Drug

April 12, 2017: Swiss pharmaceutical major Novartis has chosen to exercise an option to in-license an experimental eye drug from US biopharma Lubris. The drug, ECF843, is a recombinant human lubricin protein that could relieve dry eye symptoms, an area with a high unmet medical need that affects more than 344 million people worldwide. Financial terms of the transaction, which remains subject to the usual closing conditions and regulatory approvals, were not revealed. The move gives Novartis worldwide rights (excluding Europe) to the treatment for ophthalmic indications, with a primary focus on dry eye, which is a common condition that occurs when the eyes do not make enough tears, or the tears evaporate too quickly leading to the eyes becoming red, swollen and irritated. ECF843 is thought to restore the tear film function, reduce friction and relieve the signs and symptoms of dry eye. Results from a phase II clinical study have shown that ECF843 has the potential to provide immediate improvement. Vasant Narasimhan, Novartis's global head of drug development and chief medical officer, said the therapy could potentially be the first therapeutic to provide rapid relief of dry eye symptoms and significantly improve signs. He commented: "Exercising our option to in-license ECFF843, along with our recent acquisition of Encore Medical for the treatment of presbyopia, underscores our commitment to treating diseases of the front of the eye which impact millions of people worldwide." Novartis acquired Encore Vision last December. The Texas, US-based company's lead investigational product is EV06, a novel, topical treatment for presbyopia, which is a common age-related loss of near distance vision characterized by a progressive inability to focus on objects nearby.

Chinese Approve ChemChina-Syngenta Deal

April 13, 2017: China's Ministry of Commerce has greenlighted the takeover of Swiss agrochemicals producer Syngenta by ChemChina, as expected. The two companies said the approval, which comes without any strings attached, "represents a further step towards the closing of the transaction, which is expected to take place in the second quarter of 2017." The only regulatory approval still outstanding is from India after the US and EU competition authorities gave conditional approval last week, followed by Mexico's anti-trust commission this week. India has not commented on the Syngenta-ChemChina deal. It did, however, express concern about the $130 billion link-up of Dow Chemical and DuPont, which it said "is likely to have an appreciable adverse effect on competition."

Qatar Airways Cargo: fourth Pharma Express freighter operating from Basel

April 27, 2017: Qatar Airways Cargo will commence its fourth Pharma Express freighter service operating from Basel, effective 8 May. The additional freighter for pharmaceuticals and healthcare products increases the total service to 10 flights each week. The cargo carrier recently increased its Pharma Express flights from both Basel and Brussels in February this year. Ulrich Ogiermann (Chief Officer Cargo): "There is a growing demand worldwide for the safe and reliable transportation of pharmaceuticals. By increasing capacity from Basel, the hub of the Swiss pharmaceutical industry, we are able to provide increased uplift to our customers as well as a seamless cool-chain for pharmaceutical exports out of Basel through our GDP-compliant hub in Doha. Our global customers benefit from additional capacity to import medicines and healthcare products from this major pharmaceutical hub to markets where they are required swiftly, via Qatar Airways scheduled or charter services." Qatar Airways Cargo pioneered its Pharma Express flights in 2015, which currently operate from pharmaceutical hubs such as Brussels, Basel, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad bridging the world's major pharmaceutical trade lanes. The routes are served by the Airbus A330 freighter aircraft, offering 65 to 68 tonnes of capacity each way. A hub operations team proactively monitors climate-control on all temperature-sensitive shipments from end-to-end, to ensure the temperature-controlled process is seamless. The carrier also engages in regular external audits by shippers and forwarders. The use of refrigerated trucks at the Doha hub ensures the seamless cool-chain. The airline has seen a rapid rise in its pharmaceuticals volume, with a 39% increase in temperature-controlled shipments in 2016 and 2017 over the 2015–16 result. The cargo carrier recently added Sao Paulo as its 71st destination to the expanding QR Pharma network and added the 12th Boeing 777 freighter to its fleet.

Germany's Merck Sells Biosimilars to Fresenius

April 28, 2017: In particular, said Belén Garijo, CEO Healthcare at Merck, the aim is to align R&D to the company's priorities. "We have increasing confidence in our Biopharma pipeline and this transaction will help prioritize innovative drug development of high quality and first-to-market best-in-disease assets," she said. In particular, said Belén Garijo, CEO Healthcare at Merck, the aim is to align R&D to the company's priorities. "We have increasing confidence in our Biopharma pipeline and this transaction will help prioritize innovative drug development of high quality and first-to-market best-in-disease assets," she said.

German pharmaceuticals and chemicals producer Merck is divesting its Biosimilars business to compatriot firm Fresenius Kabi, a unit of medical technology and healthcare group Fresenius. Merck said it is shedding the business to focus on its pipeline of innovative medicines. CEO Stefan Oschmann called the divestment a step toward transforming Darmstadt-based Merck into a science and technology company. The deal is planned to complete in the second half of this year, subject to all approvals. Part of the company's Healthcare business segment, the Biosimilars business is headquartered at Aubonne and Vevey in Canton de Vaud, Switzerland and will continue to operate from the two locations after the sale. The business is developing a portfolio focused on oncology and inflammatory disorders. Under the terms of the transaction, Merck will receive from Fresenius an upfront payment of €170 million and milestone payments of up to €500 million, along with royalties on future product sales. The two companies have also sealed supply and services agreements, which include drug development support and manufacturing services. In particular, said Belén Garijo, CEO Healthcare at Merck, the aim is to align R&D to the company's priorities. "We have increasing confidence in our Biopharma pipeline and this transaction will help prioritize innovative drug development of high quality and first-to-market best-in-disease assets," she said. "The partnership with Fresenius will allow us to exploit our biosimilars portfolio to full potential while granting Merck a substantial return on prior investments."