

Innovative Medicines Initiative

The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) is the world's largest public-private partnership in the life sciences, with half of the €5 billion budget provided by the EU Commission and the other half by pharmaceutical companies. The overall objective is to accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery of innovative medicines for patients.

IMI seeks to achieve this through facilitating large-scale cross-sector collaborations between universities, pharmaceutical companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), patient organisations, and medicines regulators. Currently, the IMI is operating over 50 projects, each comprising a consortium of partners from both the public and private sectors across Europe. Public organisations and SMEs

receive funding for the research, whilst pharmaceutical companies provide in-kind contributions to the consortia. The UK has played a significant role in the IMI to date, having received the highest proportion of funding both for academic and SME partners of any country.

Organisations are encouraged to submit suggestions for future IMI projects through a simple online form, and consortia seeking funding are invited to respond to regular calls for applications.

To find out more about the IMI, visit: <http://www.imi.europa.eu>.

See across for information on two examples of IMI projects.

OrBiTo

The development of most medicines involves optimising the formulation to ensure they reach their target in the body. The Oral Biopharmaceutics Tools (OrBiTo) project aims to enhance our understanding of how orally administered drugs are absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract.

It combines *in vitro* and *in silico* approaches to produce a biopharmaceutics toolkit, which will then be validated using clinical data. This toolkit could accelerate the development of pharmaceutical products across a wide range of therapeutic areas.

Thirteen ABPI member companies are partners of the OrBiTo project, as well as two UK universities and two UK-based SMEs. The project began in October 2012 and is due to be completed in autumn 2017. So far, the project has delivered more than 50 publications.

To find out more about OrBiTo, visit: <http://www.orbitoproject.eu>

SAFE-T

One of the first IMI projects, SAFE-T addressed the lack of sensitive and specific clinical tests to diagnose and monitor drug-induced injury to the kidney, liver, and vascular system. The SAFE-T project identified biomarkers in patients' blood and urine that allow us to better predict, detect, and monitor these unforeseen drug side effects. In addition, these biomarkers will improve diagnosis and treatment decisions for chronic disease patients.

Some of the biomarkers generated by the project have received letters of support from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which will facilitate their use in the clinic.

The success of the project led to the creation of a spin-out company, SIGNATOPE, dedicated to cross-species immune assay technology, which plays a key role in the pre-clinical phase of drug development. The company benefits hugely from interaction with members of the SAFE-T consortium, such as the Critical Path Institute and 11 ABPI member pharmaceutical companies.

To find out more about SAFE-T, visit: <http://imi-safe-t.eu>