Detectors for Alzheimer’s and Infections win CHF 130,000
Medical device startups offer hope against dementia and antibiotic resistance

The latest Venture Kick final awarded a total of 130,000 francs to entrepreneurs developing devices that will diagnose disease and infection, faster and earlier. The jury of industry experts and investors selected Positrigo and Resistell to receive the highest level of Venture Kick’s financial support to bring their businesses to market. With this, Venture Kick, Switzerland’s largest philanthropic seed fund, closes the year having invested 3,240,000 francs in 125 Swiss startups in 2018.

Positrigo GmbH, Zurich: diagnosing Alzheimer’s decades earlier
Alzheimer’s disease, the most common cause of dementia, affects 50 million people worldwide. As biotech companies such as Biogen Inc. trial drugs that may slow the disease, the new challenge is to diagnose early enough to save patients before their brain tissue is damaged. Positron emission tomography, or PET, scanners can reveal the presence of proteins linked to Alzheimer’s as much as 20 years before the cognitive effects are noticeable. Positrigo’s scanner will reduce the cost of a PET scan tenfold, making precautionary scanning viable. Co-founder Jannis Fischer, whose great-grandmother suffered from Alzheimer’s, hopes Positrigo’s cheaper scanners will enable millions of people to get treatment before the same degenerative disease steals their mind and memories.

“Venture Kick will enable us to start the regulatory approval process for our medical device immediately. It is the critical path in our timeline and we want to bring our scanner to the market as quickly as possible,” Fischer, Positrigo’s co-chief executive, said. The startup, a spin-off from Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH), plans to close a 1.5-million-franc seed-round in January and collect patient data during the first half of 2019.

Resistell AG, Basel: antibiotic identification 100x faster
Drug-resistant bacteria are a threat to modern medicine. Prescribing the wrong drug bears risks: for individual patients it means longer, more-expensive hospital treatment; it also endangers global human health as bacteria develop resistance to existing antibiotics more quickly. Drug-resistant infections kill about 700,000 people globally each year, according to the O’Neill Review on Antimicrobial Resistance. Resistell uses nanotechnology and atomic force microscopy techniques developed at Switzerland’s Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) to diagnose the most effective treatment between 10- and 100-times faster than current technology, depending on the
bacteria causing infection. This speed and accuracy may halve the cost of hospital infections and slow the growth of antibiotic resistance, by helping doctors treat infection with the correct antibiotic first time.

“Having access to Venture Kick’s network is invaluable. Winning stage 3 is a mark of quality for many stakeholders and investors,” said Resistell chief executive Danuta Cichocka. The company announced the closing of their seed round just after securing the final Venture Kick funding. “Venture Kick played a very big role, as we met four of our eight investors through the program’s jury sessions,” Cichocka added. The next steps are to validate its device in pre-clinical conditions and launch an A-round of fundraising by the end of 2019.

www.resistell.com

Pictures and links:
Positrigo team, profile
Resistell team, profile

About Venture Kick

The philanthropic initiative Venture Kick provides seed stage financing to Swiss startups. In addition, it offers a well-structured entrepreneurial path towards building a winning business. Startups pitch to expert juries at each stage to obtain funding, gaining direct feedback and access to an international network of successful entrepreneurs and investors.

Since its launch in 2007, Venture Kick has supported 600 Swiss startup projects with 24.86 million francs. The program of financial support, training and network, has led to the creation of more than 445 companies and more than 5,000 jobs. Venture Kick alumni companies have attracted a total of 2 billion francs, and represented 55 percent of companies ranked in the TOP 100 Swiss Startups 2018.

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