

Press Release on the 41st AGM of the PDR

The Pharma Documentation Ring (PDR) held its 41st Annual General meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark from the 29th September to the 1st October 1999. The PDR is an association whose members represent the scientific information departments of the leading R&D-based pharmaceutical corporations. The 28 Companies, who were represented, account for more than half of the total global turnover (\$296 billion) of ethical drugs in 1999. This year's successful meeting, excellently organised by Novo Nordisk, was attended by 40 delegates from the member companies, with Lundbeck represented for the first time. The total number of member companies has shown a slight fall over the last 3 years due to continuing consolidation in the Pharmaceutical Industry. The existing PDR Board was re-elected for a further term of 2 years.

Each Annual General Meeting has a special theme and this year's was devoted to the Intranet - The Second Generation. This was particularly timely as several of the PDR Companies are in the process of re-engineering and redeveloping their Intranets. Following presentations by several PDR representatives, three external speakers from Verity, Autonomy and IHS Dataware gave presentations on their commercial indexing and searching products.

Mike Tansey, CEO of Thomson Science and Technology and Managing Director of Derwent Information gave an interesting and valuable insight into Derwent's future plans for developing its products and meeting the future needs of its customers. It was clear that closer co-operation between the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) and Derwent (both members of the Thomson Group) could lead to improved products for the R&D based Pharmaceutical Industry.

A key development reported during the meeting was the progress that had been on the development of a model licensing agreement for electronic journals with representatives of the Scientific Technical and Medical (STM) publishers. Considerable progress had been made by a small working party consisting of representatives from both the PDR and STM publishers. Two of the PDR representatives involved had been invited to address an STM Meeting taking place in October at the Frankfurt Book Fair. It is expected that the model licence proposal will be completed by the end of 1999.

The remainder of the meeting was concerned with the sharing of knowledge and experience amongst the representatives from the different Pharmaceutical Companies. Each representative gave a short report on developments that have taken place in their company during the previous 12 months. This enables participants to discuss with their PDR colleagues in other companies the individual approaches that have been taken on common issues and problems.

PDR company representatives also provide an annual report on the developments that have taken place in an information topic of their choice.

The results of several PDR member surveys were presented and discussed. These covered topics as varied as document management, newsfeeds and the quality of drug pipeline and other commercial databases

Some selected highlights from the presentations and ensuing discussions were:

- The majority of PDR companies are re-engineering and enhancing their Intranet services to deliver improved customer facilities. Over the last few years, member companies have learnt a great deal about how to design effective interfaces to published and proprietary information and the new services being developed capitalise on this learning.
- Most PDR companies are now accessing a large number of scientific technical and medical journals in electronic form. Substantive differences in the individual licensing agreements with each publisher increases the overall administration needed to establish each new agreement and to monitor compliance with specific terms and conditions. It is hoped that the model licensing agreement discussed previously will reduce this administration.
- Several information vendors are enhancing their products by providing links from secondary to primary sources and vice versa. This is seen as a valuable development by PDR representatives, though some concern was expressed that the linking may become somewhat fragmented with some secondary sources deciding to provide links to only certain selected primary sources. Such a situation could severely restrict the value of the links for R&D users of the services. It was agreed that 'Linking' should be the topic of a Special PDR Meeting to be held next spring.
- PDR companies would like to continue to migrate some of their stand alone and networked CD-ROM applications to an Intranet environment but in some cases, for example pharmacopoeias, the high licensing costs are proving prohibitive (even for the CD-ROMs)
- The improved timeliness of pharmaceutical patent information from the main database producers - Chemical Abstracts Service and Derwent Publications Ltd. - was warmly welcomed. A new patent alerting service Current Patents Gazette from Current Drugs had also attracted a good deal of interest.
- Following a successful Special PDR Meeting on Knowledge Management held in June, PDR Companies have continued to develop applications that support improved capture and sharing of acquired knowledge and information within their organisations.
- A number of PDR Companies reported that they were encouraged that the long term support of in-house TRIP database applications has been

secured due to the acquisition of this text retrieval software by the Tieto Group..

The 42nd PDR AGM will be held on 27th Sept. - 29th September 2000 in Cheshire, England and will be hosted by AstraZeneca.

In summary, the meeting was very successful and a survey conducted amongst PDR members who attended the meeting indicated a very high level of relevant and quality presentations by members and invited speakers. An enthusiastic and individual approach to the different topics was strongly evident, helping to make these AGMs one of the annual highlights of the information scene in the pharmaceutical sector.

The PDR web site, launched in 1999, can be found at <http://www.p-d-r.com>.

October 1999