

Spring 2003

2003 is the seventh year of Biotechnology YES. We are looking forward to bringing the experience of the competition to another group of PhD students and postdocs. The organisers of YES, the University of Nottingham Enterprise and Innovation and BBSRC, believe fervently in the value of the Scheme for young researchers in the biosciences, however, past participants are the best advocates. The article from last year's winners tells clearly what is involved and the team from Cambridge describe how their idea has become a real business. Our other writers, Bruce Savage and John Miles, are part of a large group of professionals who are will to give their time to help and their contribution is undoubtedly a major factor in the success of YES. Having read this Newsletter I hope you will be interested to take part this year – if so form a team, visit our website ([www.biotechnologyyes.co.uk](http://www.biotechnologyyes.co.uk)) and submit your entry.

**John Peberdy, Editor**

## AVIACLEAN (UNIVERSITY OF YORK; WINNERS 2002)

Our decision to enter the Biotechnology YES competition was for rather mercenary reasons; to gain training points for our respective PhDs and to get that extra important line on your CV. First indications of what we had let ourselves in for in entering YES were obvious at the induction day in Nottingham. After the first talk, we soon realised that we were going to have to put in a lot more work than we had first envisaged!

The first potentially divisive issue was the allocation of team roles. However, the arguments that were expected in a group of five head-strong personalities didn't arise (This was a good sign as we were to find out a few months later). The AviaClean company idea arose from a long series of heated lunchtime discussions. Once we had decided on a product we agreed to stick with it, and then concentrated on developing our business model. This proved harder than expected with everyone having slightly different ideas. However, by the time we attended the workshop in Nottingham we had compromised and created a draft business plan.

In the salubrious surroundings of the Moat House Hotel, we were given talks on topics as diverse as finance and intellectual property, but they mainly informed us that our business plan wasn't as good as we thought it was and required *a lot* of work. Unlike many others we were not daunted by this, and whilst many got down to work straight away, we thought it would be rude to not utilise the hotel's sauna and Jacuzzi and sample the excellent night life of Nottingham.

Despite some seriously foggy heads the next morning we realised that we had some hard work to do. We worked well as a team and whilst the parts of the business plan were prepared by individual members the group as a whole discussed the plan in detail and so everyone knew each bit of the business back to front, which proved incredibly useful later on! The presentations were a shock, we expected the judges to be gentle with the teams, but they took no prisoners as they dismantled each business plan piece by piece. Somehow, we managed to hold fast and got through to the next round. However, we discovered



The AviaClean team with members of the 2002 Final Judging Panel: Mr Keith Binding, (Spirit Consulting), Professor Julia Goodfellow (Chief Executive of BBSRC) and Dr Alison Campbell (MRC).

that the prize for winning the regional final was the opportunity to work much harder and redo our business plan from scratch. We went through the presentation so many times in the end that we could all recite it perfectly from memory.

We didn't feel nervous in the final until we got up to do the presentation for the very last time. All the other business plans and presentations were superb, but the judges appeared to like our unconventional product, which differed from the other predominately medical ideas on offer that day. Though, I don't actually believe that AviaClean's main asset was the idea behind the 'company', but the team that put it together. What paid dividends in the end was that we complemented each other and worked very well as a team, and because of that didn't waste time arguing and got a lot of good work done.

So what did we all gain from the Biotechnology YES competition? Whilst we did get the training points and the CV line, we also gained a deep insight into the biotechnology industry, gained confidence in our abilities to create and present something of value. Do we recommend the scheme? Completely, if you are thinking about doing this, do it, have a go, you will definitely not be disappointed.

**Simon Chandler, University of York**



Our success in the Biotechnology YES competition in 2001 and subsequently the Cambridge University Entrepreneurs 50K competition in 2002 has provided a springboard to turn the ideas behind Arrayscreen into a real business. The company is developing genetic technology to assess susceptibility to a variety of common, but preventable conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes. Arrayscreen hopes

to focus on individuals genetically predisposed to these conditions with the aim of implementing targeted drug therapy and lifestyle changes before serious clinical events occur. The company is adopting an integrated approach using bioinformatics, molecular biology and clinical validation to develop its products, and the team foresee that the technology will create the next generation of genetic tests for use in doctor's surgeries and at the bedside.

In the 15 months since we were involved in Biotechnology YES, we have been busy moulding our business model to enhance its superior commercial viability. We have incorporated the company and have made a number of critical business contacts that will be

essential for our initial growth. Our success in the Cambridge event lead to a speaking invitation at a Gala Networking dinner held at the London Science Museum in June 2002, hosted jointly by the MIT Entrepreneurship Centre and the University of Cambridge Entrepreneurship Centre (CEC). We have also been invited to present our ideas at various Enterprise conferences including the ERBI meeting at the Sanger Centre in Cambridge.

Subsequent meetings with various business angels have identified potential sources of seed capital investment. We are also currently in the process of applying for a DTI Smart Award to allow our business to take flight. Patent applications are in the

pipeline, as are meetings with financial advisors ..... all this while completing our PhD and medical degrees as well! Who ever said establishing a company was easy?!!

We are extremely grateful to Biotechnology YES as it allowed us to recognise our own potential and to create and establish a viable commercial enterprise. Moreover, it provided us with constant support and encouragement along the way - we hope that our positive experiences will inspire others to give it a try!

**Meena Jain and Akhilesh Reddy, ArrayScreen Ltd**  
**E: info@arrayscreen.com**

## SIX YEARS OF ASSOCIATION WITH BIOTECHNOLOGY YES

I suppose it is fair to say I have been involved in most aspects of the Biotechnology YES programme, from being a speaker at the first ever course in Nottingham, to being a judge at the finals in London in 2001.

I have always enjoyed being involved, mainly because I love the enthusiasm of the students. This reached such a competitive pitch that on one Sunday morning, after giving my lecture in Nottingham when I was moving around between the groups to offer advice, one group asked me to lower my voice since they were concerned that the group on the table nearby maybe able to overhear my advice!

Biotechnology YES is an excellent competition since it gives postgraduates and postdocs a glimpse into many aspects of a high-tech company and gives them a chance to work together as a team. All the students I have been involved with always seem to enjoy all aspects of the competition and really put some effort into their presentations. I often say after my lecture that I wish I had had the opportunity to attend a Biotechnology YES course when I was an undergraduate, then I might not have made some of the mistakes I made when starting up my company.

The lecture I usually give is on Development issues in the diagnostics business, illustrated by a case study. It is interesting that quite often a medical diagnostics business

idea is chosen by the students. Last year I gave a presentation on Cytocell, the company I founded in 1991 and where I was chief executive for 10 years. This case study is an illustration of the principle sources of finance but also gives the students an idea of the trials and tribulations of running a high-tech company.

I look forward over the coming years to continue my association with Biotechnology YES, which I am sure will continue to grow from strength to strength.

**Professor Bruce Savage, BioQuest Consulting**



**Professor Bruce Savage, BioQuest Consulting, with a 2002 Finalists.**

## ESTABLISHING A CAREER AS A PATENT ATTORNEY

In pondering how best to write this article, I have of course reflected on my own career path which has led me to become a partner in a successful private practice firm of patent attorneys.

The first step in becoming a patent attorney is to secure a training position in a firm such as mine, or in an industrial patents department. In essence, the training position is a type of (paid) apprenticeship where you learn the practical skills of patent agency, as well as studying for the professional exams.

The practical skills revolve around obtaining patent protection for your client's inventions and analysing other people's patent positions which might have an effect on your client's ability to commercialise their products. There are two sets of professional exams: one to qualify as a Registered Patent Agent in the UK, and the other to qualify as a European Patent Attorney. There are fourteen papers in total, and typically it takes around five years to become fully qualified. It is possible to get an exemption from the basic level UK exams by successfully completing the relevant course at Queen Mary and Westfield College or at the University of Manchester.

Typically, training positions are not advertised and recruitment relies on speculative applications. To be successful in getting a

position, you will need a strong academic record (higher degrees are quite common, particularly in biotech), a lively and broad interest in technology (particularly in your chosen field), and an ability to

write and speak clearly. Sticking out from the crowd (in a relevant way!) is useful, and having Biotechnology YES on your CV would be a plus. You will also require a degree of luck, which is emphasised by how I got my training position: I telephoned, out of the blue, the patent attorney who had drafted the patent application on which I am named as an inventor following work that I had done as a post doc. He said the firm was recruiting and would I like an interview! I got the job and have stayed at the same firm and the rest, as they say, is history.

Not quite. In fact, it was an awful lot of hard work, being thrown in the deep end working on real cases from day one; swotting for exams in the evenings; getting to learn other aspects of the business; keeping up to date with the law. But it has been and continues to be hugely enjoyable and rewarding.

**Dr John Miles, Eric Potter Clarkson**



**Dr John Miles, Eric Potter Clarkson.**