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### MEETING ABSTRACT

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##### **on-course®: a portal for in-service training and career development for biomedical scientists**

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**Background:** The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI; [www.imi.europa.eu](http://www.imi.europa.eu)), Europe's largest public-private funding partnership for biomedical research, was established to speed up the development of better medicines for patients in Europe. IMI education and training projects were funded specifically to address the skills and competency requirements needed by the biomedical sector in Europe. IMI supports the European Medicines Research Training Network (EMTRAIN; [www.emtrain.eu](http://www.emtrain.eu)) as a collaborative education and training project with 12 academic and 15 industrial partners. One of EMTRAIN's actions has been to build the interactive online database on-course® ([www.on-course.eu](http://www.on-course.eu)) to catalogue all EU postgraduate biomedical courses (continuing professional development (CPD), master and PhD) [1] to overcome the difficulty in accessing the right training programmes of the right quality. Finding a course containing high-quality content at the right price, time, location and in particular with the appropriate recognition by employers and/or professional/scientific bodies has been largely left to luck in the past.

**Methods:** The on-course® portal enables scientists to navigate the 'jungle' of postgraduate courses, address education and training gaps/quality and enhance interaction between course seekers and course providers. The on-course® portal has been designed to allow course seekers to apply tailored search strategies. It has been populated through a manual website search of over 1,000 course providers in over 30 EU Member and Associated States.

**Results:** As of July 2014, on-course® contains information (including details for costs, credits, location, language of tuition, detailed course description, breakdown of modules (for master and PhD courses)) on 3,020 master courses, 973 PhD and 2,285 CPD courses. The IMI education and training topics (SafeSciMet, EU2P, PharmaTrain and EMTRAIN) have also developed a set of quality standards for CPD courses which are displayed on the course details page [2]. Uniquely, the catalogue not only helps course seekers find an appropriate course, but also provides data for research on cross-sectional and longitudinal trends in post-graduate course provision in Europe. Thus far, on-course® has published on course fee trends and academic rankings for master courses [3] and is currently preparing a detailed overview of the distribution of English-taught master courses. on-course® is an integral part of an EMTRAIN-led work stream called LifeTrain that is helping to build a common European framework for mutual recognition of CPD in biomedical sciences [4]. In addition we have developed a database of learning methodologies to support learners.

**Discussion:** on-course® continues to grow by approximately 200 new courses being entered per month. Towards the end of September 2014, on-course® will be re-launched, using a new

content management system. It will appear with a refined interface, improved functionalities and new features and services. It will switch to the XCRI data format (eXchanging Course Related Information) which is used to share information about courses between education institutions and course database compilers (<http://www.xcri.co.uk/>).

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#### References

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