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MEETING ABSTRACT

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Innovative education and training: a major step forward for Europe through the imi-train initiative

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Background: Well-trained scientists and professionals can only stay at the leading edge of developments in their fields through continuing professional development (CPD). To safeguard Europe's global competitiveness in medicines research a strong environment for innovative education and training is an imperative which must aim at developing and maintaining competence and competencies. imi-train [1], through its education and training sub-projects, has taken up this challenge and developed solutions related to these goals.

Methods: imi-train is a European partnership between EMTRAIN [2], Eu2P [3], PharmaTrain [4], SafeSciMET [5] and the associated EUPATI [6] education and training programmes funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) [7]. Together they have tackled a series of gaps and issues in the European postgraduate education and training arena: on-course[®] [8], a searchable online course catalogue, was developed to display Europe's Master, PhD and CPD programmes in the biomedical sector [9]. LifeTrain [10] was initiated as an open community with a unifying goal: driving lifelong learning for biomedical professionals [11]. As a service to course providers, quality standards have been established [12] and a repository of teaching methodologies was compiled which describes their pros and cons (to be made available shortly). In the area of PhD training, a framework for public-private partnership PhD programmes was conceived and a four-day PhD workshop was designed, aiming at creating industry awareness among PhDs. New course programmes have been developed in the areas of pharmacovigilance and pharmacoepidemiology (Eu2P) [13], medicines development sciences (PharmaTrain), safety sciences (SafeSciMET) and training for patients (EUPATI): all are run in public-private partnership, focus on personalised, innovative teaching approaches, apply modular structures combined with e-learning components and comply with the defined IMI quality standards. They support defined competency profiles thus focussing on competence rather than on pure knowledge acquisition; including implementation of the Specialist in Medicines Development.

Results: on-course[®] currently contains around 7000 programmes and is steadily growing. LifeTrain, through four ground-breaking workshops, have brought together the major stakeholder groups: course providers, professional/scientific bodies, employers, and individuals, for an intensive dialogue. More and more competency profiles are being developed and implemented, including most

recently the core competencies for pharmaceutical physicians and drug development scientists of the PharmaTrain Federation [14] or the European Certified Pharmacologist (EuCP) programme of EPHAR and EACPT [15]. These and more than 15 other best practice examples have been presented at the 4th LifeTrain Workshop [16]. Around 80 organisations have formally signed up as signatories of LifeTrain, the majority being professional bodies.

Discussion: Despite the numerous ground-breaking achievements, there is still a long way to go. Europe requires a radical change of the post-graduate/professional educational system to foster lifelong learning. There is a need for a researcher training infrastructure similar to the ESFRI Research Infrastructures. imi-train has taken the first major step in that direction.

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