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MANAGEMENT OF A PHYTO-PHARMACEUTICAL DRUG DISCOVERY ENVIRONMENT IN A SMALL BIOTECH COMPANY

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This presentation will describe an example of a how a Phyto-Pharmaceutical screening platform in a small European Biotech company is organized. In this case a screening plant extracts for activity against Leishmaniasis, a common (sub)-tropical infectious disease affecting 12 million patients worldwide for which no new treatment had been put on the market for a very long time. The biodiversity screening platform we used was based on species collection, fractionation and bio-assay driven screening at an industrial high throughput scale.

The various challenges facing such a program with a plant extract will be discussed (e.g. difficulties to register a group of active ingredients with the regulatory agency, even though the structure of every single compound had been identified). The drug discovery process in the laboratory is only one step in the flow from Bench-to-Bedside: many stakeholders are involved. Through practical examples insight will be given in several of the other factors (at organizational, at management and at strategic levels) that influence decision making. A key lesson learned is that programs like this require intensive partnering and a multi-stakeholder public private partnership approach.