**Press Release**

W.A. de Vigier Awards 2021

**12 Startups Instead of 10 Make It to the Finals**

Solothurn, May 11, 2021. **From 217 submitted projects, the jury picked their Top 17 in February. The 17 were assessed and presented their ideas to the Foundation Board, who now chose their Top 12. The range of industries is very wide and the quality of the submission keeps rising. In the run for a W.A. de Vigier Award, the personality of the CEO is equally important as the groundbreaking product. On June 16, up to five young leaders will receive the W. A. de Vigier Award, each endowed with CHF 100,000.00.**

„Once again we’re blown away by the high level of submissions. Our jury found it challenging to pick their Top 10 so they opted for 12 finalists. We’re looking at a wide range of industries represented in this year’s cohort and see sophisticated startups both from universities and from technical colleges“, says Regula Buob, Managing Director of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation.

**These are the Top 12 (in alphabetical order)**

***cellvie AG from Matzingen (TG) - Leveraging the Therapeutic Potential of Mitochondria***

When the blood flow to a part of the body is interrupted, cells get damaged or die, even if blood flow is restored. Such cell injuries manifest themselves for example in heart attacks and strokes, killing millions of people every year. cellvie transplants viable mitochondria, the cell’s powerhouse, into distressed cells. It’s like jump- starting a car, allowing the cells to re-establish their energy metabolism and survive. The Harvard spin-off’s mitochondria therapy will first be applied in organ transplant patients.

***Cowa Thermal Solutions AG from Root (LU) - More Storage Capacity in Heat Pump Systems***

Heat pumps powered by photovoltaic systems are considered the gold standard for low emission CO2 heating of buildings. The problem is that PV electricity is available as surplus throughout the day, but not during the night and early morning hours. Cowa's technology increases the storage capacity of conventional water-based heat storage systems by up to a factor of 4, typically increasing the heating autarky level of common systems from around 30% to 70%.

***dimpora AG from Zurich (ZH) – Natural, High Performing Materials for Outdoor Clothing***

Current outdoor clothing is chemically harmful for the very environment outdoor enthusiasts love so dearly. In addition to that, these chemicals are unhealthy for the wearer. ETH spinoff dimpora provides outdoor brands with a biobased material that is as waterproof and breathable as its non-natural alternatives. This material allows the industry to pivot from old, resource intense and chemically harmful processes and products to a sustainable, healthy solution.

***flowbone SA from Renens (VD) – Injectible Gel for Hip Bone Strength Restoration in Elderly Patients***

In our aging society, fracture prevention in the elderly is an urgent topic. Hip fractures are the most costly and devastating, with a 1-year mortality of a staggering 20%. Drugs are inefficient for the hips and surgical techniques too invasive. EPFL spinoff flowbone developed a new generation of biomaterial that can be injected into the hips in a simple ambulatory procedure to locally restore bone strength in hips before they break.

***kaiosID SA from Villars-le-Terroir (VD) – Hidden Codes to Fight Counterfeiting and Improve Traceability***

Counterfeiting and grey markets pose two growing challenges for brands. kaiosID fights counterfeiting and illicit trade by covering the product’s packaging with invisible patterns that can be easily identified by an intuitive smartphone app. Once printed on the packaging, the random patterns become the fingerprint of the product and allow for product authentication (genuine/fake) and identification (traceability), thus restoring trust in brands and logistics.

***LEDCity AG from Zurich (ZH) – Smart LED Lighting Systems to Lower Energy Use***

Up to 40% of energy costs in commercial buildings are related to lighting. LEDCity equips light sources with sensors and AI-optimized algorithms to regulate lighting automatically. The startup’s plug and play system runs on a decentralized control unit, which means that no expensive management system is required. LEDCity’s solution drastically lowers energy use, cuts operating costs by up to 90% and reduces environmental impact.

***Lumiphase AG from Zurich (ZH) – Optical Communication Chips to Manage the Exploding Data Traffic***

Our world is becoming increasingly digital and data traffic is exploding. The infrastructure behind data centers and telecom networks is hitting a wall, and the industry needs a disruptive solution. Lumiphase develops novel optical communication chips that are very inexpensive, super compact and highly efficient. They allow the industry to replace today’s costly and power-hungry connections with a new generation of electro-optical links, ultimately enabling a new paradigm in datacenters‘ architecture and leading to more flexible, efficient and sustainable use of computing resources.

***MIRAI FOODS AG from Wädenswil (ZH) – Cultivating Real Meat from Animal Stem Cells***

Current meat production is unsustainable and has huge animal welfare implications. It is responsible for about 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and meat consumption is projected to grow by 70% by 2050. MIRAI FOODS cultivates real meat from animal stem cells without genetically or otherwise modifying the cells. The startup does what animals do – only outside the body. This approach can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from meat consumption by 80 to 90% and no animal has to suffer and die to produce the meat.

***Nagi Bioscience SA from Ecublens (VD) – Replacing Animal Testing with Tests on Microorganisms***

Testing of new substances is key to ensuring their efficacy and safety for humans and the environment. These tests are conducted on animals, which is ethically problematic, expensive and time-consuming. EPFL spin-off Nagi Bioscience developed the first device that allows fully automated and standardized substance testing on the micro-organism C. elegans as a sustainable, ethical and cost-effective alternative to animal testing, while still providing whole-organism results.

***Testmate Health (ribolifeDx SA) from Chavannes-de-Bogis (VD) – At-Home Test for the Four Most Common STDs***

The wait-time for test results identifying the four most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is three to seven days. Testmate Health will be the first rapid at home self-test that provides results in minutes, in an anonymous, convenient and easy manner. Results are scanned and uploaded to a paired app that guides patients towards appropriate follow-up if necessary.

***Terapet SA from Geneva (GE) – Better Dose Control in Proton Therapy For Cancer Treatment***

Proton therapy is the most precise radiotherapy for cancer treatment. However, monitoring the doses during treatments remains a guessing game based on simulations. Terapet SA, a CERN startup, develops

a novel medical device which enables medical doctors for the first time to monitor the delivered proton dose inside the patients during cancer treatment: in-vivo, non-invasive, in 3D and real-time. This solution ensures that every patient receives the right dose, every time.

***Volumina Medical SA from Epalinges (VD) – Minimally Invasive Breast Reconstruction After Cancer***

Reconstructive surgery after breast cancer is currently costly, risky, highly invasive and results are temporary or don’t look natural. EPFL spin-off Volumina Medical created AdiPearl, an injectable implant with the capacity to regenerate damaged tissues for breast reconstruction in a single minimally invasive procedure. AdiPearl will improve the quality of life by bringing to breast cancer survivors a safe, effective, quality, and cost efficient breast reconstruction solution.

**About the W.A. de Vigier Awards**

The W.A. de Vigier Award is the oldest prize for young entrepreneurs in Switzerland and, with annual prize money of up to CHF 500,000 (five times CHF 100,000), is one of the most highly endowed startup prizes in Switzerland. Over the past 32 years, the foundation has distributed over CHF 11 million of seed money. The results are over 90 flourishing startups, successful IPOs, multiple company exits and above all, many newly created jobs.

The following aspects are relevant for the evaluation of the projects: The entrepreneurial personality, the degree of innovation, the value for society as a whole, the technical and financial viability, market prospects and the potential for job creation.

**Contact details for questions**

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