



And the winner is... brain research

By Chris Tachibana

At the annual Lundbeck Drughunter Contest, high school students show what they know about the brain

“Can you remember what’s wrong with you?” (Kan du huske, hvad du fejler?) was the attention-grabbing title of the winning poster at the 2011 Lundbeck Drughunter Contest. Students Ida Raabe, Lisbeth D. Christensen and Anne Katrine Sand Rasmussen from Munkensdam Gymnasium each took home an iPod Touch as the prize for their poster on the causes and treatments of Alzheimer’s disease.

- The contest stimulated my appetite for science. The topics were especially interesting because they were about something that goes on in the brain, says Lisbeth D. Christensen.

The students were advised by biology teacher Lone Ryttersgaard, who said she heard about the contest from an invitation letter Lundbeck sends to science and technical schools. The title was only part of what made the poster a winner.

- The presentation of information and accuracy was important. It had to look right and be right, says Lone Ryttersgaard.

From company tours to a national contest

Lars-Peder Haahr, Division Manager at Lundbeck, was one of four Lundbeck scientists who judged this year’s contest. He has been involved in Drughunter, off and on, since it began about seven years ago.

- It started as an idea from the head of R&D at the time, Claus Bræstrup, to do something special for high school students. At first, classes came in for a tour, but they didn’t really get much of an impression of what we do. To make the experience more memorable, interactive activities were added, eventually evolving into the Drughunter contest, explains Lars-Peder Haahr.

The Drughunter Contest provides biology and chemistry teachers with real-world research examples to use in their classroom. Each participating school, from Jylland to Sjælland, has the opportunity to have a Lundbeck researcher come to visit and give a presentation on brain research. The contest engages students by having them work for about a month, in teams of two or more, learning about topics relevant to Lundbeck’s interests, such as Parkinson’s Disease or depression. The students summarize what they’ve learned on a poster and the best posters from each class are chosen by the students or the teacher to be national Drughunter entries. Selected posters are displayed at the Drughunter Final, held at Lundbeck in Valby, Denmark in April, as part of Denmark’s Day of Research, where the students present their work to judges and visitors. The contest judges also use the posters to select six groups to give an eight-minute presentation on the main stage in the Lundbeck auditorium, to determine the overall Drughunter winners.

Drughunter online and on stage

Simon Mehl Augustesen, International Media Specialist at Lundbeck, says:

- The contest is meant to inspire young people to go into natural sciences, and to show the intent and effect of research and development on brain diseases.

From a few groups in the early years, he says, the contest has grown to about 40 posters and hundreds of participating students. And in 2011,



the contest went live and online. A team of media and communication students from Ørestad Gymnasium, led by teacher Peter Skovfoged Laursen, turned the ground floor of Lundbeck into a media center with live streaming of the day's events, including interviews and updates from a news desk. Media students Lærke Larsen and Alexander Pantón, standing amid the cables, lights, and cameras, said the experience gave them background information on brain science as well as hands-on experience in real-time media. The media team had a lot to cover, starting with a welcome from Lundbeck CEO Ulf Wiinberg, and an encouraging talk from Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Charlotte Sahl-Madsen, who asked the students:

- Do you know how cool you are?

News sources give an impression of young people as lazy and interested only in Facebook and Paradise Hotel (reality show), she said. Although only a few raised their

hands when asked who was considering a research career, Sahl-Madsen hope the students would give it another thought, because Drughunter shows:

- You can, will, and dare to make a difference.

Raising interests in life science

After presentations from the six groups competing for overall winner, Henrik Rindom, Chief Psychiatrist at the Psychiatric Center of Hvidovre, gave an entertaining and fact-filled talk featuring cartoon drawings to illustrate how the neurological reward system is involved in addiction. Finally, the overall winners were announced. Markus Thieden, Bjarke Reimann, and Magnus Schrøder from Det Frie Gymnasium won HP laptop computers for their presentation on Huntington disease, with molecular details on new treatment possibilities targeting a specific enzyme in the disease mechanism. In an interview afterwards, posted on YouTube by the Ørestad Gymnasium media group,

Resource websites

Drughunters

www.lundbeck.com/drughunters

Drughunter Facebook page

www.facebook.com/DrughunterDysten

Schrøder explained that the group found Huntington disease particularly interesting because in spite of all we know about it, we have no cure and can treat only symptoms. The months of preparation made him much more interested in life science research, he said, and he'll definitely participate next year. Reimann expressed enthusiasm for learning in a different way than the usual high school curriculum, and seeing how a company like Lundbeck works.

- It's just fun. It's nice to meet all the young people and nice to know they learned something they wouldn't have learned without this contest: knowing about a disease, and how hard it is to treat. Of course they'll know a little more about Lundbeck and its pharmaceuticals. But also, if someone in their family get the disease, maybe they'll understand how difficult it is to treat, and treat the person with more respect, ends Lars-Peder Haahr, exhausted by the long day, but energized by the students' enthusiasm