

30 March 2023

# iFAST Wins Pitching Competition and €10,000 prize at European AMR Conference



Toby King (left) received the winner's cheque from Doug Haggstrom of Incate (centre) and Philipp Marchand of Vossius Law.

iFAST Diagnostics Ltd, a new spinout from Southampton University which is commercialising a revolutionary test to ensure patients are always given the most appropriate antibiotic, has won first prize and a 10,000 Euros prize in the pitching competition at the European Antimicrobial Resistance conference in Basel, Switzerland.

There were 11 finalists picked from over 30 entries, and each had 4 minutes to convince the audience of around 450 conference delegates why they should win the prize.

Dr. Toby King, CEO of iFAST, commented: “We are delighted to win this award – it’s a wonderful endorsement of our ground-breaking new technology which we hope will save the lives of thousands of patients per year. It’s particularly pleasing as we only raised our seed funding a couple of months ago yet we are already receiving recognition from industry experts.”

Philipp Marchand of Vossius Law, added: “Congratulations to iFAST Diagnostics for winning this year’s start-up pitching event from 11 outstanding pitches of attractive start-ups at the 7th AMR Conference in Basel. VOSSIUS is at the pulse of new developments in the field of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a field where IP incentives are crucial and dynamic. We actively support early-stage companies dedicated to the medical needs of the present and the future.”

And Doug Haggstrom of INCATE noted: “iFast was able to convince over half the audience of the promise of their solution. There is clearly a need and interest in new approaches to the challenge of timely diagnosis in the fight against AMR.”

Antimicrobial susceptibility testing (AST) is a technique used to identify an effective antibiotic for the particular organisms infecting the patient. It avoids unnecessary use of inappropriate antibiotics, speeds up treatment and saves lives, particularly in cases of Sepsis and MRSA. However, current gold standards for AST typically take 48-72 hours, a prolonged delay that means clinicians rely on empirical treatment with broad-spectrum antibiotics until analysis can be completed.

A decade of research at the University of Southampton has led to a revolutionary diagnostic test. The iFAST platform enables the rapid identification of antibiotic susceptibility and resistance

within a few hours of taking a patient sample. iFAST measures the electrical properties of 5,000 individual bacteria in 30 seconds using multi-frequency impedance in a microfluidic chip. The approach gives clinicians the ability to rapidly identify effective treatments for patients within a single shift, without disrupting the workflow in the lab.

The company is currently building its first systems for evaluation in hospitals and laboratories in the UK and beyond, and expects to have products on the market for research next year and for clinical use in 2025. Importantly, the technology enables a higher throughput of tests, using a smaller laboratory footprint and is expected to be cost competitive with the current gold standard methods.

Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is a critical worldwide challenge, often mentioned as the potential next pandemic. It is one of humanity's most imminent threats and has many causes, including over-use of antibiotics and climate change, which is rapidly expanding disease vectors. Antimicrobial resistance caused over 1 million deaths in 2019, more than malaria and AIDs combined.

You can follow iFAST via their website [iFASTDiagnostics.com](https://iFASTDiagnostics.com) or on LinkedIn at [@ifast-diagnostics](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ifast-diagnostics).