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Banner Year For Novo Nordisk At The 18th Annual Scrip Awards

Winners Announced At A Glittering Ceremony In London

by **Scrip Team**

AstraZeneca and Moderna also shone as the pharma, biotech and allied industries came together in London on 30 November to celebrate a year of exceptional achievement at the 18th Annual Scrip Awards, hosted by the actor, comedian and presenter Stephen Mangan.

Having played such a crucial role for nearly three years in addressing the global COVID-19 pandemic, the pharma and biotech sectors are enjoying a return to something approaching normality. Nevertheless, the new normal is different from the old normal. There are many ways in which pharma has made a virtue of a COVID necessity, from the widespread adoption of decentralized trials to offering more flexible working conditions for employees.

The age of biology is flourishing and the Scrip Awards offers a snapshot of this remarkable landscape, acknowledging the extraordinary achievements of the people who work so hard to develop life-changing therapies and deliver them to patients.

The 16 Scrip Awards categories range from those that applaud the broader achievements of companies, to those for innovation in deal making, advances in R&D and the more personal accomplishments of teams and individuals.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award

(sponsored by ICON), which this year went to former [Novo Nordisk A/S](#) CEO and pioneer of corporate social responsibility, Mads Øvlisen.

It capped a good year for Novo Nordisk which also took away the trophy for Pharma Company of the Year (sponsored by Parexel). Two other companies enjoyed multiple wins on the night – [Moderna, Inc.](#) and [AstraZeneca PLC](#).

While Novo Nordisk is well known as a diabetes powerhouse, this year has seen the group broaden its horizons, investing millions into cardiovascular and rare diseases R&D. It has been busy on the business development front, sealing the \$1.1bn acquisition of [Forma Therapeutics Inc.](#) and inking innovative deals with the likes of [Flagship Pioneer](#) and [Ventus Therapeutics Inc.](#)

In the meantime, demand for its weight loss medicine Wegovy (semaglutide injection 2.4mg) has exceeded expectations and is set to become a game-changing mega-blockbuster at Novo Nordisk. Overall group sales and profit have been growing strongly, and the company is investing more in R&D. It also continues to be an industry-leading force in ESG, striving to do business in a financially, environmentally and socially responsible way.

Other categories that reward the achievements of firms over the qualifying 12 months include those acknowledging the critical role that CROs play in drug development.

The award for Best Contract Research Organization – Full-Service Providers went to [ICON PLC](#) for the second year in a row. With the integration of [PRA Health Sciences, Inc.](#) progressing, ICON has been capitalizing on the scale, technology and data analytics capabilities that the acquisition delivered, offering the most comprehensive suite of integrated clinical development services in the industry.

“The new acquisition of PRA makes the company a very interesting offer,” said the judges. “The results and efficiencies achieved with COVID trials are very impressive and they have a number of exciting technologies.”

The award for Best Contract Research Organization - Specialist Providers went to Veramed. This global CRO impressed the judges with its continuous validation, operations project management improvements, reduction in database lock and its green credentials. “A strong entry with very clear successes in the COVID arena,” they said.

The judges awarded the WuXi AppTec’s Biotech Company Of The Year Award (sponsored by WuXi AppTec) to Moderna. In 2021, Moderna transformed from a small biotech company that had never produced an authorized product into a major industry player responsible for a lifesaving vaccine in the face of an unprecedented global pandemic. Last year, Moderna produced and shipped more than 800 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine, increased its total revenue

from \$803m in 2020 to \$18.5bn in 2021, and built out a global footprint with 11 commercial subsidiaries across North America, Europe and Asia Pacific. “An unprecedented and transformational year for Moderna with the development of its COVID vaccine,” the judges said. “A true success story leveraging a global pandemic to catapult into a household name.”

[BeiGene China](#) won the China Biopharma Leadership Award (sponsored by Avance Clinical). BeiGene has had a very productive year, demonstrating impressive product sales growth over the year and first quarter 2022 (+146%), expanding its partnering deal with Novartis and continuing to progress a large pipeline of over 40 clinical candidates, noted the judges. It also expanded its manufacturing capabilities at the Suzhou site and established the Bioisland Innovation centre in Guangzhou. “Quite a leading company!” and “Ticks all the boxes,” said the judges.

Deals And More

Deals are the life blood of the industry and awards here celebrate the various ways different parties get together to advance their businesses.

The Licensing Deal Of The Year award went to [GSK plc](#) and [Alector Inc.](#) for the development and commercialization of progranulin-elevating monoclonal antibodies AL001 and AL101 for a range of neurodegenerative diseases, including frontotemporal dementia, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease.

Including a \$700m upfront payment and involving unique CNS targets, the judges said the “goal of parallel development across four to five diseases rather than a go-it-alone sequential approach of one disease at a time shows a strategic approach to accelerating therapies able to address unmet patient needs for the debilitating conditions of Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and dementia.”

The Quris Partnership Alliance Award went to [GRAIL](#) and AstraZeneca for the research, development and commercialization of companion diagnostic assays for early-stage cancer.

The GRAIL:AstraZeneca partnership is the first of its kind, combining the two companies’ expertise across R&D and market access to change the current treatment paradigm for patients with early stage cancer. Together, the aim is to promote early detection of disease, the rapid deployment of therapy to patients needing it most and the agile management of cancer as a chronic disease.

The judges lauded this “very creative, serious deal,” a hand-in-glove collaboration that was a good example of the long-hoped for partnership between targeted diagnostics and targeted drug therapies. “This is a best-in-class partnership ... Both companies are doing what they do best, each partner is expanding responsibilities into areas not previously a focus for either company, sharing more data than typical for a diagnostic partnership in order to harness synergies, refining the technology and giving it the highest chance of mutual success in a highly innovative

area,” they said.

[*Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*](#) and the Society for Science’s Science Talent Search initiative won the Community Partnership Of The Year award (sponsored by ThermoFisher Scientific).

Through its ongoing partnership with the Society for Science, Regeneron seeks to support the hard work and novel discoveries of promising leaders inspired to improve the world through STEM. Regeneron partnered with the Society in 2017 to become the title sponsor of the Science Talent Search, the US’s oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors. Additionally, in 2020, Regeneron became the title sponsor of the International Science and Engineering Fair, the world’s largest science research competition for high school students.

“This is a very well thought-of concept of partnership. It helps create more talents in sciences by investing in young students with the aim of having more people interested in pursuing careers in STEM. Innovations for the betterment of mankind will increase. This will bring well-being to all in time to come,” the judges said.

The Private Financing Deal Of The Year award went to [*SalioGen Therapeutics*](#) for its \$130m series B financing. In January, SalioGen completed an oversubscribed and up-sized financing that far exceeded its original \$75m target. Given deteriorating market conditions, the team decided not only to execute highly curated investor outreach but also to preemptively structure the financing to allow additional capital commitments. SalioGen plans to use the proceeds to build its Gene Coding platform, to expand its team and generate sufficient data to take its plans to regulators.

The judges liked the cutting edge, ambitious technology at the center of this financing. “Ongoing funding by this new group of investors to support this budding science distinguishes this financing,” they said.

Research And Development Matters

All stages of R&D are recognized by the Scrip Awards categories, with the Best New Drug Award (sponsored by WCG) going to [*Immunocore, Ltd.*](#)’s Kimmtrak (tebentafusp).

Kimmtrak is the first approved treatment for patients with unresectable or metastatic uveal melanoma and the first T-cell receptor (TCR) therapeutic to receive regulatory approval. The novel bispecific protein comprised of a soluble TCR fused to an anti-CD3 immune-effector function that specifically targets gp100, a lineage antigen expressed in melanocytes and melanoma. An off-the-shelf advanced therapy, Kimmtrak represents a paradigm shift in treatment for this aggressive form of cancer.

The judges noted its breakthrough designation was confirmed by excellent Phase III data that

showed Kimmtrak demonstrated unprecedented median overall survival benefit as a first-line treatment for metastatic uveal melanoma. “An exciting and important breakthrough product for a poorly treated condition,” the judges said.

The Clinical Advance Of The Year (sponsored by IQVIA) category was very closely fought this year, with [Daiichi Sankyo Co., Ltd.](#) and AstraZeneca’s Phase III DESTINY-Breast04 trial of Enhertu in breast cancer ultimately prevailing.

Enhertu (trastuzumab deruxtecan) became the first HER2 directed therapy to show a survival benefit in patients with HER2 low metastatic breast cancer in the DESTINY-Breast04 trial. The results showed that the antibody-drug conjugate (ADC) could provide benefit to patients across the HER2 spectrum, requiring reconsideration of the breast cancer classification system that has been guiding breast cancer diagnosis and treatment for more than two decades. The US Food and Drug Administration followed with a swift approval for the new indication in August.

The judges described Enhertu as a major breakthrough in breast cancer therapy. “This development deserves a standing ovation,” they said.

The judges were also hugely impressed with [Boehringer Ingelheim GmbH](#) and [Eli Lilly and Company](#)’s Phase III EMPEROR-Preserved trial of Jardiance in heart failure, to which they gave a rare “Highly Commended” recognition.

Based on EMPEROR-Preserved, Jardiance (empagliflozin) became the first FDA-approved heart failure therapy to demonstrate a significant risk reduction in cardiovascular death and hospitalization for heart failure, regardless of ejection fraction. It provided a new option for millions of adult heart failure patients with preserved ejection fraction, a patient population that accounts for about half of all heart failure cases and has been described as the single largest unmet need in cardiovascular medicine. “This is a significant clinical advance!” said the judges.

Further back in the development arc, MSD’s Innovation Award (sponsored by MSD) went this year to [Orca Bio Inc.](#)’s Orca-T cell therapy, which the judges described as “a major advance in transplant medicine.”

Orca Bio is revolutionizing allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplants with the goal of providing better outcomes for patients who are at historically at risk of graft-versus-host disease. Its platform uses a precision cell selection process that sorts the more than 100 billion cells that patients would receive in a transplant down to the less than 1% that provide therapeutic benefits. From these cells, Orca Bio builds a designer immune system for patients.

People Awards

The biotech and pharma industries would be nothing without the people they employ and a

number of categories seek to reward both individual and team performance over the qualifying year.

The Business Development Team Of The Year award went to [Synaffix B.V.](#) This highly experienced team of C-suite executives has a successful track record in delivering high-value deals and world-class science in the highly sought-after ADC space. The company signed six licensing deals in the qualifying period – with deal valued at around \$500m-\$1bn – and it has three ADCs already in clinical development.

“This range of deals reflects well on its team getting out there and selling its platform,” said the judges. “Synaffix is run by set of individuals leaders who provide deep and broad intellectual bandwidth ... a company to watch out for in the future.”

Michael M Morrissey, president and CEO of [Exelixis, Inc.](#) was awarded the trophy for Executive Of The Year – Private companies and those with a market cap <\$7bn.

Morrissey has led Exelixis through a significant period of growth for its discovery, development and commercial functions. In addition to overseeing the expansion of the company’s successful Cometriq/Cabometyx (cabozantinib) franchise to exceed \$1bn in US net revenues in 2021, Morrissey has helped to usher in a new era of R&D, including building a differentiated clinical pipeline spanning small molecules and biologics, ADCs and other biotherapeutics addressing highly promising targets.

The judges said Morrissey was “a ‘get it done’ executive with actual results for patients.” Scientific/commercial leaders like Morrissey are “a rare commodity in the biopharma industry,” they added. “Having a passion for oncology disease, not getting distracted by significant business failure and energizing the organisation to fight back to win, he has the tenacity and resilience to create a world-class integrated oncology organization.”

Executive Of The Year – Companies with a market cap >\$7bn went to Stéphane Bancel, CEO of Moderna. Bancel recognized the potential of a new class of mRNA medicines from Moderna’s inception in 2010 and has since overseen the development of its COVID-19 vaccine and the firm’s incredible growth, leading its transformation from a small Massachusetts-based biotech company into a major industry player. Moderna has produced and shipped hundreds of millions of doses of its COVID-19 vaccine and increased its total revenues to \$18.5bn in 2021.

“Stéphane Bancel is an outstanding situational leader who swiftly executed an opportunity that required multiple leadership skills wherein he galvanized the key stakeholders to believe in the ability of the organization to respond to such pandemic situation responsibly and delivered the goods with such gravitas and admiration,” the judges said. “Crisis time leadership was quite visible right through the journey wherein the whole world got the benefit of the outcome.”

But the night belonged to Scrip's Lifetime Achievement Award (sponsored by ICON) winner, Mads Øvlisen, former CEO and chairman of Novo Nordisk.

Øvlisen dedicated his career in the pharma industry to what is now a 99-year-old global top 20 firm employing around 50,000 people worldwide.

When he joined Novo Industri in 1972 as a young lawyer on a one-year project, it was already a significant insulin supplier, and one with a long and estimable history of research.

He stayed on, becoming CEO in 1981 and overseeing significant product development. Then in 1989, he steered the company through a defining merger with its closest rival, Nordisk Gentofte to create Novo Nordisk. Over the nearly thirty years of his leadership, the company's revenues increased eightfold, primarily through organic growth.

But Øvlisen valued people before money. One of his key legacies was the emphasis he placed on corporate social responsibility, something he began before it was fashionable. The company was the first in Denmark – and one of the first in the world – to publish an environmental report, in 1994, and it introduced its first CSR report in 1999.

As CEO, he showed that business success and caring for people went hand in hand. He laid down a set of principles that articulated the founders' core beliefs in integrity, responsibility, honesty and mutual respect, and made sure that all of the company's leaders embodied these values. These principles endure today, more than 20 years after he stepped down as CEO and more than 15 after he ceased to be chairman.

His commitment to employees, society and the environment saw him appointed to the United Nations Global Compact by Kofi Annan.

Among his many other activities, he has been the chairman of Lego, an adjunct professor in CSR at Copenhagen Business School, co-founder of the European Academy for Society in Business, a member of the Global Impact Board, chairman of the Danish Art Council, chairman of the Royal Danish Ballet and a passionate supporter and sponsor of the arts and artistic research.

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