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NIH turns to crowdsourcing to repurpose drugs

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Experimental drugs proven safe but perhaps not sufficiently effective in initial testing or against a first disease target may sit gathering dust on the shelves of pharmaceutical companies. An NIH-sponsored effort based on a crowdsourcing strategy to establish collaborations between industrial and academic partners to test and develop these therapeutic compounds was met with an overwhelming response and has led to clinical testing of a broad range of pilot projects and a newly announced round of funding opportunities. These findings are described in a Review article in the preview issue of the new journal *Drug Repurposing, Rescue, and Repositioning*.

Christine M. Colvis, PhD and Christopher P. Austin, MD, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Bethesda, MD, explain that the Center does not focus on a particular disease or organ system, allowing it to support a broad scope of projects that link indications with unmet medical needs to the mechanisms of action of new drug compounds that are ready to move into patient testing. In the article "The NIH-Industry New Therapeutic Uses Pilot Program: Demonstrating the Power of Crowdsourcing") the authors state that among the new funding opportunity announcements released by the Center in May were 12 therapeutic agents for pediatric indication consideration.

"This article describes not only how targeted crowdsourcing can link up the assets, the know-how, and the creativity that drug repurposing needs, but also how such a program can be organized to serve the best interests

of all concerned parties," says journal Editor Hermann Mucke, PhD, H.M. Pharma Consultancy, Vienna, Austria. "Pharmaceutical companies and academia must collaborate to leverage their huge potential synergies in compound re-development, and by arranging and mentoring this pilot program NCATS has firmly established its role as a mediator in drug repurposing."

More information: *Drug Repurposing, Rescue, and Repositioning* DOI: 10.1089/drrr.2014.0006