

HIV diagnostic kit wins European inventors prize

June 9 2016



HIV infecting a human cell. Credit: NIH

A rapid HIV diagnostic kit for developing nations, designed by

Cambridge University researcher Helen Lee, won the Popular Prize at the European Inventor Awards on Thursday.

Other awards went to a ground-breaking application which reduces [air pollution](#) from [diesel engines](#), a revolutionary treatment for Parkinson's disease and a new magnetic imaging system which promises to enable doctors to obtain instant 3D images of cancers.

Chinese-born Franco-British clinical medicine expert Lee's invention was by far the most popular, garnering 64 percent of the 56,700 public votes cast online—the highest number ever received.

With just a few drops of blood the machine, which has been in use since 2012, provides instant and accurate results.

"It is the size of a coffee machine. The reactives don't require transport in the cold. The process is so simple that anyone can be trained in 10 minutes," Lee told AFP.

The Doctors Without Borders group has already used it to screen 40,000 people in Malawi and Uganda.

A Danish research team won the small and medium-sized enterprises prize for the application of ammonia in solid form to reduce air pollution from diesel engines and act as an emissions-free fuel.

The Danish team's invention also "holds promise for other environmentally-friendly applications," said Benoit Battistelli, president of the European Patent Office which runs the award.

The technology has already been used in a fleet of buses in Copenhagen and the team of Tue Johannessen, Ulrich Quaade, Claus Hviid Christensen and Jens Kehlet Nørskov hope to see it in major cities such

as London, Beijing and Shanghai and, eventually, in private cars.

French neurosurgeon Alim-Louis Benabid was honoured for "revolutionising" the treatment of Parkinson's disease and other neurological conditions with the use of high-frequency deep brain stimulation via a probe implanted into the patient's skull.

It has become a standard treatment around the world, and has benefited over 150 000 people, "who can now lead self-directed, independent lives thanks to the invention," the EPO said in a statement.

Germans Bernhard Gleich and Juergen Weizenecker won the award in the "industry" category for their improved magnetic resonance imaging system.

In the "non-Europe" category US chemical engineer Robert Langer won for the invention of biodegradable plastics that boost targeted delivery of powerful anti-cancer drugs and have already helped over a million people worldwide.

"The inventions recognised with this year's award give new hope to people suffering from disease, increase diagnostic efficiency, protect the environment and save thousands of lives on the road," said Battistelli.

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Citation: HIV diagnostic kit wins European inventors prize (2016, June 9) retrieved 17 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-06-hiv-diagnostic-kit-european-inventors.html>

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