



For more information:

Courtney Cox, PR Counsel

BioFlorida

(850) 559-0708 or CourtneyC@TheMooreAgency.com

For Immediate Release:

BioFlorida Annual Conference Drives Growth of the Life Sciences Industry in Florida

FT. LAUDERDALE, FL (October 16, 2018) – Hundreds of Florida’s executives, scientists, researchers, investors, legislators, and service providers from the biopharmaceutical, medical device, and healthIT gathered at the BioFlorida Annual Conference to hear from experts on recent industry trends, connect with investors and potential partners, celebrate Florida innovation and achievements, and continue the growth of the industry

“Our industry is a major and ever-growing economic driver in Florida with the number of companies in the states biotechnology industry growing 14.7% in 2017 alone, making it one of the stronger growth years since 2008 and surpassing the national average,” said Nancy K. Bryan, President and CEO of BioFlorida. “The industry consists of just over 87,000 direct jobs with an average salary of \$78,000 across 6,200 establishments. The BioFlorida Annual Conference unites the states life science leaders to celebrate scientific and business achievements, explore high-impact public policy initiatives, and drive partnerships to continue the growth of the industry in Florida.”

The conference addressed distinct areas of strength for Florida’s life science industry such as regenerative medicine, neurosciences, and cancer with a special focus on Latin America and potential areas of collaboration. Attendees also gained insights from industry experts on how to grow their businesses, with dedicated sessions on funding, commercialization, pricing, and reimbursement.

Seed and early stage companies participated in the BioPitch competition, which provided opportunities for coaching, as well as presentations to investors for feedback and potential funding. The four semi-finalists included HealthSteps (Gainesville), [KynderMed](#) (Tallahassee), [Antibiotic Adjuvant](#) (Gainesville), and [STAT3 Therapeutics](#) (Coral Springs)– with [STAT3 Therapeutics](#) (Coral Springs), a company taking a unique approach to develop and commercialize drugs that target the activated STAT3 molecule in a specific and impactful way without significant toxic side effects, winning the top recognition.

The Spotlight on Innovation session featured four companies that have achieved major milestones: [TherapeuticsMD](#) (Boca Raton), [CTD Holdings, Inc.](#) (Gainesville), [HedgePath Pharmaceuticals, Inc.](#) (Tampa), and [Hesperos, Inc.](#) (Orlando).

BioFlorida also recognized individuals and organizations for their outstanding achievements across four distinct categories. This year’s award recipients include:

David J. Gury Company of the Year Award

The Company of the Year is designated for a company or organization that has had significant achievements leading to the advancement of the life sciences in Florida.

The 2018 David J. Gury Company of the Year Award was presented to Robert Finizio, CEO of [TherapeuticsMD](#), an innovative healthcare company focused on developing and commercializing novel products exclusively for women.

Under the leadership of Finizio, the company went public in 2011 and today maintains a current market capitalization of over a billion dollars. Since 2013, TherapeuticsMD has raised more than \$500 million in capital to support the development of two 505(b)(2) programs for menopause management. TherapeuticsMD received FDA approval of Imvexxy™ in May 29, 2018 and launched the product in August. TherapeuticsMD also has an approaching PDUFA date for TX-001HR on October 28, 2018 and licensed the US rights to Annovera™, the first long-acting prescription birth control that is patient-controlled, procedure-free and reversible, in July 2018. The company's products are designed to address the unique changes and challenges women experience through the various stages of their lives with a therapeutic focus in family planning, reproductive health, and menopause management. TherapeuticsMD was listed on the NYSE MKT before transferring to the Nasdaq in 2017.

Weaver H. Gaines Entrepreneur of the Year Award

The Entrepreneur of the Year Award recognizes an entrepreneur who has made extraordinary contributions to the growth of life sciences in the leadership of a company or institution.

The 2018 Entrepreneur of the Year Award was presented to Matthew D. Disney, Ph.D., Scientific Founder of [Expansion Therapeutics](#) and professor in the bi-coastal Department of Chemistry at [Scripps Research](#) in Jupiter.

Dr. Disney's path to entrepreneurship originated in basic science, as he studied RNA-ligand interactions during a time when RNA was still considered the "dark matter of the genetic universe." Over time, RNA has revealed itself to play a critical role in genetic transcription, cellular regulation and protein construction. While many voices in the life sciences declared RNA to be a pointless drug target, due to its size and other factors, Disney was convinced it could offer a new approach to targeting hard-to-treat diseases. He developed a mathematical model to predict which RNA could be bound with drug-like molecules and now boldly intends to develop novel treatments for multiple diseases. His mathematical system for drugging a specific type of RNA damage called expansion repeats, led to the launch of Expansion Therapeutics, and has also led to multiple imitators and launched a new front in the war on disease. While Expansion Therapeutics' R&D group works on multiple targets in Jupiter, including a cause of myotonic dystrophy Type 1, Disney and his team at Scripps Research are continuing to develop compounds intended to treat multiple other rare "orphan" diseases with no known cure, and more common disorders that show poor prognoses, such as drug-resistant cancers.

To date, Expansion Therapeutics has raised \$55.3 million in financing, and is Scripps Florida's largest spinoff since the institute was founded in 2004.

BioFlorida Leadership Award

The BioFlorida Leadership Award is designated for a BioFlorida volunteer who has taken on a leadership role, dedicated significant time to the mission, and has served as a true ambassador for the organization.

The 2018 BioFlorida Leadership Award was presented to Valerie Landrio McDevitt, JD, CLP, Associate Vice President at the [University of South Florida](#) (USF) where she is responsible for the incubation program, which includes the Tampa Bay Technology Incubator and the Student Innovation Incubator. In her tenure at USF, McDevitt has consistently taken the technology transfer program to one of the top-ranked for issued US patents and executed licenses in the nation. USF's incubation program has been called by one reporter as the "crown jewel" of Tampa Bay serving about 70 companies in the past year—with half of those companies in the biosciences.

McDevitt has served as an invaluable member of BioFlorida, serving on the Tampa Bay chapter leadership team, BioFlorida Board of Directors, three-time Conference Program Chair, three-time time Co-Chair of BioPitch, and most recently as Chairman of the Board with her term recently ending in July.

McDevitt is currently leading an effort with [Florida Funders](#). Through a startup grant from the federal Economic Development Administration, Florida Funders is establishing SEED Florida, an early stage fund that will leverage both a traditional VC fund and the power of Florida Funders.

BioFlorida Lifetime Achievement Award

The 2018 BioFlorida Lifetime Achievement Award is reserved for recognizing an individuals' outstanding leadership in the industry throughout their career that has significantly contributed to the growth of the industry.

The 2018 recipient of the BioFlorida Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Maurice R. Ferré MD, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Directors at [INSIGHTEC](#).

Ferré is a serial entrepreneur with a focus on transformational medical technology. INSIGHTEC, the innovator of incisionless surgery. INSIGHTEC, the innovator of incisionless surgery, utilizes technology with highly focused sound waves to destroy targets deep inside the body with no surgical incisions. This year, Ferré secured \$150M in financing to commercialize the first approved indication in the brain for essential tremor. Additionally, the company is developing breakthrough technology that temporarily disrupts the blood-brain barrier (BBB) to potentially treat Alzheimer's disease and brain tumors. Ferré's most recent success was as the CEO and Chairman of MAKO Surgical Corp, the world leader in robotic orthopedic surgery, a company that he co-founded. Stryker Corp. acquired MAKO for \$1.65B in December 2013. Ferré has received numerous awards in recognition of his many accomplishments, including the prestigious Ernst & Young 2007 Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Florida's life sciences industry will unite again in Tallahassee at BioFlorida's Legislative Day in February. The 2019 BioFlorida Conference will be held October 2019 at the Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina in Tampa. To find details or register for upcoming BioFlorida events please visit, www.BioFlorida.com.

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[About BioFlorida](#)

BioFlorida is the voice of Florida's life science industry, representing 6,200 establishments and research organizations in the biopharmaceutical, medical technology, HealthIT and bioagriculture sectors that collectively employ just over 87,000 Floridians (TEconomy/BIO - 2018). BioFlorida's member driven initiatives provide a strong business climate for the advancement of innovative products and technology that improve lives and promote economic benefits to the state.

The [BioFlorida BioDatabase](#) is a searchable resource which includes the latest information on Florida's bioscience industry and unique profiles of biopharmaceutical and biomedical technology companies. The location of all BioFlorida BioDatabase companies is also shown on a [distribution map](#). The BioDatabase follows the industry-held standard of defining a biotechnology company according to the Ernst & Young guidelines that include core R&D and involve the use of modern biological techniques to develop products or services for human health care, animal health care, agricultural productivity, food processing, renewable resources, industrial manufacturing and environmental management. The BioFlorida BioDatabase does not include healthcare services companies, medical device companies without a biocomponent or biomed companies that are involved only in manufacturing and/or distribution of products.