An interview with Dr Rivka Ravid, Director, Brain Bank Consultants

In the run up to SMi's 5th annual **Biobanking** conference, industry expert **Dr Rivka Ravid** from Brain Bank Consultants, was asked a few questions about her talk at the event taking place on 22nd and 23rd June and about the Biobanking Industry.

Dr Ravid will be providing a keynote address entitled: **From Specimen to Biomarker? Biobanks in discovery of novel candidate biomarkers for neurological disorders**. The presentation will explore CNS biomarkers, the quality control of biobank specimens as well as CFS analysis. A brochure is available to download online at www.bio-banking-event.com

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A short background to Dr Rivka Ravid:

- Dr. Rivka Ravid is a Tissue/Bio banker and a neuroscientist; her main expertise's are in Brain/tissue /Bio Banking (BTB -banking) and the harmonization of internationally accepted medico-legal-ethical guidelines for use of human specimens in basic and clinical research.

- Dr.Ravid is actively involved as a consultant for the coordination of European and Asian-pacific clinical trials in Neurology, target discovery and drug development by several pharma companies. Her line of work and main interests include setting up Tissue and Bio banks, making the public aware of the need for human specimens for clinical and basic research to discover disease etiology and develop therapies and treatments to cure these diseases.

- Dr. Ravid pioneered the setting up a national donor program in the Netherlands and invested several years in professionalizing procedures to optimize the transparency and accountability. She is an expert in all issues correlated to the harmonization and refinement of the procedures for procurement, handling, storage and dissemination of specimens for research, as well as the legal and ethical musts in Biobanking.

Q. What are the strengths of this year's Biobanking Conference?

This meeting will deal with all major issues affecting Biobanks including:

- An update of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Uncovering Best Practices including regulatory processes
- Facilitate access to biospecimens of interest
- Preventing inconsistent quality within collections of biospecimens
- Translating Biobank investments into patient solutions
- Adopting a biobanking business model that is profitable and sustainable over the long term In addition to valuable discussing and evaluating the validity of novel Biomarkers

Q. What do you believe are the biggest challenges for the industry?

A possible discovery of newly discovered valid Biomarkers for various diseases
Drug Discovery heavily relies on well designed and accessible biobanks and the samples they contain, how they've been stored and annotated and the quality of accompanying clinical data.

- Describing who is involved, responsible and benefiting from successful biobanking repositories
- Clinical assessment and viability of samples
- Importance of electronic tracking of samples to ensure maximise use
- Examples of successful studies of Biomarkers discovery
- Ethical code for Bio banking and the use of genetic information.

Q. What will attendees take away from your talk?

The attendees will be introduced to the most relevant and hot issues in Biobanking, namely:

1. SOP's for specimen procurement, management, preparation dissemination and storage.
2. Quality assessment of the disseminated samples.
3. A code of conduct for the social, ethical and legal aspects.
4. IT infrastructure, including proper electronic tracking systems.
5. Safety procedures.
6. Overview of the currently available CNS-Bio-markers.
7. Success stories of the alliance between Bio-markers and Bio banks

They will meet other people who are striving to put the right tools on scientist's and pharma industry desktops so they can readily access bio samples and information to aid them in designing experiments and making quicker, better decisions on their projects.

Q. What is the future for the industry?

The industry is currently facing several risk management issues including:

- The value of the clinical specimen:

– Samples are used from clinical studies conducted across broad therapeutic areas
– Clinical trials accounted for a significant outlay by the pharmaceutical industry
– Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies spend extremely high amounts on research and development of new drugs

- Risk to Revenue - to bring a drug from discovery phase all the way to market
- Risk to Scientific Knowledge - Advancing the fields
- A pharmaceutical biorepository is not a static collection of biological or environmental specimens, but rather a dynamic organization with functional complexities.
- The evolution of the pharmaceutical biorepository has resulted in the need for centralization of specimen receipt, inventory, processing, distribution and storage
- Knowledge of the types of materials being stored, the required storage and handling conditions, the projected retention periods, projected growth of the specimen numbers, and the projected use of the materials is essential to good repository design.

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