

## **Business Award for DKFZ Spinout**

**Start-up company PEPperPRINT has won the first prize of the 2009 Science4Life business plan competition. The prize is worth 30,000 euros. PEPperPRINT's business idea is based on producing peptide chips with a laser printer. The method developed by scientists at the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) is many times less expensive than previous comparable methods.**

PEPperPRINT was founded as a spinout from DKFZ in 2001, but it did not start business activity until early this year. The founders of the start-up company – Dr. Volker Stadler, Dr. Ralf Bischoff and Dr. Frank Breitling from the Junior Research Group “Chip-based Peptide Libraries” – had jointly developed a novel method which makes it possible to generate peptide chips faster and at lower costs than by conventional methods. Now, the company offers its know-how as a service to other researchers. In addition to selling customized peptide chips, PEPperPRINT also produces complex peptide libraries that are used in research collaborations.

The concept also convinced the jurors of this year's Science4Life Venture Cup, in which PEPperPRINT came in first of 98 business ideas submitted and won a prize of 30,000 euros. Alongside the advantages of the method, it was primarily the good business idea and the goal-oriented entrepreneurial spirit that determined the decision. Launched in 1998, the Science4Life Cup annually awards a prize to promising enterprise concepts from the life sciences area and supports their implementation. For PEPperPRINT, this prize is already the third award within 14 months, following the Science Award of the “Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e. V.” and the title “Selected site in the country of ideas 2009”.

Peptide chips are indispensable for numerous biochemical and diagnostic detection methods. The PEPperPRINT method has revolutionized the production of such chips. The peptide laser printer makes it possible to generate arrays of up to 160,000 peptides on a chip, compared to 10,000 peptides maximum that are possible by conventional methods. In addition, the novel method reduces costs by several orders of magnitude. “Our technology will make research possible that would simply have been too expensive before,” says Ralf Bischoff.

Apart from research, peptide chips are useful primarily in medical diagnostics. Thus, they are able to detect antibodies which indicate the type of disease in patient blood. The chips can also be used for specifically searching for peptides that can be utilized for cancer treatment or play an important role in vaccine development.

A picture of the prize winners is available at

<http://www.dkfz.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2009/images/PEPperPrint.JPG>

(from left to right: Frank Breitling, Volker Stadler, Thomas Felgenhauer, Ralf Bischoff).