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Women's Health and Gender Medicine

Swiss Pharma Science Day 2026 - Conference Report

Date: 20 August 2026
Place: University of Bern, Von Roll Campus
Theme: Women's Health and Gender Medicine

The 19th Swiss Pharma Science Day (SPhSD) took place on 20 August 2026 at the University of Bern's Von Roll Campus. Organised by the Swiss Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences (SAPhW), the annual meeting provided a platform for exchange between researchers, students, clinicians, pharmacists, industry representatives and innovators across the pharmaceutical sciences. The 2026 edition focused on “**Women's Health and Gender Medicine**”, highlighting the importance of considering sex and gender in pharmaceutical and biomedical research, drug development and healthcare. The meeting brought together **more than 240 participants** and featured **86 scientific posters**, demonstrating the breadth and vitality of research within the Swiss and international pharmaceutical sciences community. Both numbers are considerable increases from the previous version. While 100 more participants engaged, the number of poster submissions doubled from previous years.



[Prof. em. Dr. Matthias Hamburger, SAPHs-President]

The scientific programme brought together internationally recognised researchers from Switzerland, Europe and North America. Keynote presentations addressed a broad range of topics in women's health, including endometriosis, sex-dependent effects in cancer drug development, drug delivery and bioengineered models for maternal and fetal health, and evidence-based approaches to menopause. Further perspectives addressed vulnerability-sensitive care and the role of pharmacy practice in women's health.

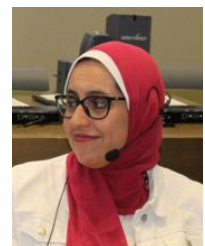


Prof. Saunders, University of Edinburgh, opened the meeting and talked about endometriosis and women's health. She addressed the biological and clinical challenges associated with endometriosis, highlighting the need for improved understanding of disease mechanisms and better therapeutic approaches for a condition that remains underdiagnosed and undertreated. She showed new approaches to test delivery systems.

Next, PD. Dr. Özdemir, University of Bern, talked about sex-dependent effects in cancer drug development, and the need to consider these early in development. She discussed the often observed, for a lack of a better word, ignorance of researchers towards sex specific effects in cancer biology and pharmacology highlighted how biological sex can influence disease mechanisms, treatment responses and drug development. The presentation emphasised the importance of incorporating sex as a relevant biological variable throughout biomedical research.



Prof. Hagar, University of Toronto, next expanded the meeting and talked about Drug delivery and bioengineered models in maternal and fetal health. She explored innovative approaches to drug delivery and bioengineering in pregnancy, illustrating how advanced experimental models can help address the specific challenges associated with treating pregnant patients while protecting maternal and fetal health.





Prof. Dr. Dr. Stute, University of Berne, talked about menopause and evidence-based healthcare in this period of time in a women's life. The programme also addressed menopause from an evidence-based perspective, discussing current challenges in research and healthcare and the importance of translating scientific evidence into improved clinical management and patient care.



The last keynote lecture was given by Prof. Matooni, University of Montreal, and he talked about vulnerability-sensitive care and women's health, and the role that pharmacists could play in helping women who suffer from intimate partner violence. This further perspective broadened the discussion beyond biomedical mechanisms to consider vulnerable patient populations and the importance of responsive and inclusive healthcare approaches.

Together, the keynote lectures demonstrated the interdisciplinary nature of women's health research, spanning basic biology, pharmacology, drug development, biomedical engineering, clinical medicine and healthcare practice.



After a light lunch, the break not only allowed the participants to enjoy an engaging poster session but also included opportunities for younger participants to strengthen connections between scientific research, professional development and innovation. Two new formats were introduced:

- The **Career Corner** provided students and young researchers with opportunities to engage directly with professionals from academia, industry, clinical pharmacy and other sectors about career pathways.

- The **Innovation Corner** showcased emerging technologies and innovative approaches in pharmaceutical science, personalised medicine and healthcare.

The afternoon also featured a **Startup and Innovation Session**, presenting companies from the Swiss ecosystem working on innovative approaches to women's health, including antibody-based treatment of endometriosis, next-generation breast cancer screening and wearable technologies for maternity care. An investor perspective complemented these presentations and highlighted opportunities and challenges in translating scientific discoveries into new healthcare solutions. The afternoon kicked off with a dedicated startup and innovation session, highlighting the growing role of innovation and entrepreneurship in advancing women's health. Representatives from FimmCyte, MoleSense and Xemperia presented their emerging technologies and approaches, followed by a Q&A with the founders that gave participants the opportunity to engage directly with the innovators. The session concluded with an investor perspective from Nina Reinhart, investor and founder of Meno Swiss, who discussed opportunities and challenges in investing in women's health startups. Together, the presentations connected scientific innovation with entrepreneurship, investment and the translation of new ideas into future healthcare solutions.

Scientific programme – highlighting early career researchers

In addition to invited lectures, the programme provided substantial opportunities for early-career researchers to present their work. Three researchers were selected for short oral presentations, while selected poster presenters participated in dedicated flash poster talks, allowing them to communicate their research in a concise and engaging format. The short oral presentations and poster flash talks provided a dedicated platform for early-career researchers to present their work to the wider SPhSD audience. The short oral presentations featured Valentin Schittny (University of Basel), who presented research on linking single-particle cargo heterogeneity to the functional delivery of lipid nanoparticles; Esther Spinatsch (University of Basel), who discussed the implementation of a digital support tool for emergency contraception counselling in community pharmacies; and Jonathan Vicente dos Santos Ferreira (University of Bern), who presented a case study investigating the effects of psychotropic medication on hospitalisation risk during heat episodes. The subsequent poster flash talks, chaired by Dr. Andreas Schittny (SAPHS) and Dr. Hussein Monir (swissYPG), showcased work by Fernando Quiñones (University of Bern) on monoacylglycerol lipase and cannabinoid receptor activation, Giada Marchesani (ETH Zürich) on potentially inappropriate medication tools among Swiss healthcare professionals, Oliwia Majchrzak (University of Geneva) on extracellular vesicle lipid signatures as biomarkers in breast cancer, and Rita Gelli (University of Florence) on advanced delivery systems for colonic drug delivery. Audience voting culminated in the swissYPG Audience Award, recognising an outstanding flash presentation and further encouraging interaction between presenters and participants. The prize was ultimately won by Oliwia Majchrzak.

Supporting the next generation of pharmaceutical scientists remained an important objective of the meeting. Eight poster prizes were awarded to recognise outstanding contributions across different areas of pharmaceutical sciences and clinical pharmacy. The high scientific quality of the poster contributions was recognised

through several poster awards, covering a broad range of pharmaceutical sciences and highlighting both excellence in research and effective scientific communication. Chiara Pratesi (University of Basel) received the AKB Prize for Best Poster in Molecular Pharmacy/Biopharmacy, while Tamara Balsiger (University of Basel) received the Max Zeller Söhne AG Prize for Best Poster in Pharmaceutical Biology/Phytomedicine, Elisa Goetzinger (ETH Zurich) received the Glatt Pharmaceutical Services Prize for Best Poster in Pharmaceutical Technology, and Katharina Polossek (University of Basel) was awarded the GSASA Prize for Best Poster in Clinical Pharmacy. The meeting also awarded three overall poster prizes. Coralie Rey-Gorrez (University of Geneva) received the 1st Poster Prize (Sponsor SAPHs), Daniel Gao (ETH Zurich) the 2nd Poster Prize (Sponsor GSIA Stiftung), and Neslihan Salar (University of Bern) the 3rd Poster Prize (Sponsor Pharmazeutische Gesellschaft Zurich). In addition, a Special Poster Prize in Women's Health, particularly aligned with the theme of SPhSD 2026, was awarded to Simone Eder (RCPE GmbH) by Pharmatrans Sanaq AG.

Honours and Recognition



The award ceremony also recognised outstanding contributions to the pharmaceutical sciences through two SAPHs honours. Prof. Dr. pharm. Jean-Christophe Leroux was named SAPHs Fellow 2026 in recognition of his contributions to innovative drug formulation and delivery technologies aimed at improving the efficacy and safety of drug delivery and developing patient-friendly approaches to drug administration. The award also recognised his role in training and inspiring generations of pharmacists and academics through his teaching and research.

. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Hans Leuenberger was appointed SAPHs Honorary Member 2026 for his longstanding leadership of the Swiss Society of Pharmaceutical Sciences, his vision in transforming the organisation into the Swiss Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and his initiative in launching the Swiss Pharma Science Day.

Together, these honours recognised both scientific excellence and sustained contributions to the Swiss pharmaceutical sciences community, highlighting the achievements of established leaders alongside the recognition given to emerging researchers through the poster awards. Overall, the awards provided recognition to researchers at different career stages and across diverse areas of pharmaceutical science. Importantly for the sponsor programme, several awards were directly supported by professional and industry organisations, demonstrating the sponsors' active contribution to recognising scientific excellence and supporting the next generation of researchers.



The event also introduced a Kids Corner, offering free childcare for young children for the first time. This initiative aimed to make participation more accessible to researchers with family responsibilities and reflected the meeting's broader commitment to an inclusive scientific community.

Discussion and networking – panel discussion and apero

A central element of the meeting was the interdisciplinary panel discussion on Women's Health, moderated by Nicole Estermann of the Artemis Women's Health Foundation. The discussion brought together perspectives from research, clinical practice and innovation and provided an opportunity to consider how scientific discoveries can be translated into improved healthcare. The scientific programme was complemented by an informal networking apéro, allowing participants to continue discussions and establish new professional connections.

Impact of the meeting

Following the feedback of the participants, the organizing committee concludes that the 2026 Swiss Pharma Science Day successfully combined high-level scientific exchange with opportunities for networking, career development and innovation. With more than 240 participants, 86 posters and contributions from speakers and researchers from Switzerland, Europe and North America, the meeting provided a broad platform for exchanging knowledge across academic, clinical and industrial environments. The strong participation in the poster programme and the introduction of new interactive formats demonstrated the value of creating opportunities for young scientists to present their work, interact with established researchers and explore career and innovation pathways.

The successful organisation of the meeting was made possible through the commitment of the organising and scientific committees, institutional and professional partners, the coworkers of Paola Luciani who were all assisting with the practical aspects of the meeting, and, importantly, the financial support of the sponsors. Their contribution directly supported the organisation of the meeting, the participation and recognition of early-career scientists, and the development of new formats fostering scientific exchange, innovation and professional networking.



(1) Matthias Hamburger; (2) Paola Luciani; (3) Marcel Mesnil; (4) Klaus Eyer; (5) Carole Bourquin



Paola Luciani with her team...



... and with speakers



Ready to welcome 240 persons!
Silvana Geissshüsler and Christine Moll

The organisers gratefully acknowledge all sponsors and partners for their support of the Swiss pharmaceutical science community and for helping to create a platform where scientific excellence, collaboration and innovation can come together.

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