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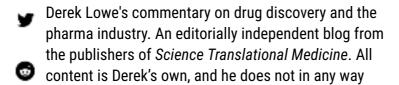


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The Open Source Malaria Project, So Far

By Derek Lowe | 16 September, 2016

The Open Source Malaria (OSM) project has a paper out (open-access, fittingly) in ACS Central Science, and it's an interesting read. This is the effort from Mat Todd at Sydney and many, many others around the world to build on the malaria phenotypic screening results released in 2010 (and prioritized in 2011) by GSK. They've been following a true open-source model – every part of the project is out there for people to see, and for anyone to join in with suggestions. That's always going to be trickier to do than it is in the software world, where the amount of equipment needed is far lower and there are correspondingly few barriers to entry, but this work shows that (under favorable conditions) it can be done. There's a lot of rot talked about open-source drug discovery, but this is one of the closest examples to the open-source-coding world that I'm aware of.

The paper's actually a good read, and I think it's the open-source nature of the work that does it. More than almost any paper I've ever read, it goes into the ins and outs of the work on the various lead series. It's actually a very accurate look into how these things work – synthetic difficulties, re-routing, structure-activity surprises, arguments about which structures are worth moving on with, tradeoffs at every turn. This is exactly how medicinal chemistry works, and in the future I'll be recommending this paper to show people a blow-by-blow account of it.

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