INJOY: INNOVATING THE JOY OF EATING FOR HEALTHY AGING. EIT HEALTH SUMMER SCHOOL

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Abstract

Aim:
The aim of the Innovating the Joy of Eating for Healthy Aging (INJOY) EIT Health Summer School is to increase awareness of the foods, patterns, and behaviours associated with healthy living, while training entrepreneurs how to transform evidence-based nutrition science into citizen-centric health applications, businesses, start-ups, and services. Funding for the pilot training was provided by the European Institute for Innovation & Technology Health (EIT Health), which is supported by EIT, a body of the European Union and the partnership of the University of Barcelona, Karolinska Institutet, Groupe SEB, Nestlé, CIBERFES, and Casa Ametller.

Methods:
Thirty applicants from diverse educational and geographical backgrounds were recruited and encouraged to submit their own entrepreneurial ideas as part of their application. The 10-day learn-by-doing training was designed to blend entrepreneurial and innovative concepts (such as design thinking, visual thinking, study cases, expert panels and on-site workshops) and health application components (technologies, devices, tools, products and services) related to empowering consumers to self-manage diet and health. Through in-depth workshops highlighting intrinsic capacity and frailty prevention, INJOY students work in multi-disciplinary teams leveraging nutrition science to create citizen-centric health business models from a functional-centric paradigm. Students engage in an off-site gastronomy workshop at Fundació Alicia, which is a center devoted to technological innovation in cuisine, the improvement of eating habits and the evaluation of the food heritage. The final day of the training culminates in a pitching day where students present their entrepreneurial project business models and receive feedback from a panel of experts in the field.

Results:
INJOY launched on 25 June 2018 with 30 students from multi-disciplinary experiences in engineering, biomedicine, innovation, marketing, biology, healthcare, medicine, food technology, pharmacy, and nutrition. The students included a diverse geographical background including the United Kingdom, Sweden, United States, Thailand, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Uruguay, and Poland. First place was awarded to the project focused on innovating the consumer shopping experience through the creation of a device designed to integrate purchasing with nutritional profile data. Second place was awarded for two projects: an innovative monitoring and integrated care platform linking cardiologists and patients and for a non-dairy, superfood dessert with modified texture for dysphagia patients. Following the conclusion of the summer school, one of the second-place projects from INJOY later won a 60,000 € grant in collaboration with a digital cardiac rehab company to perform a pilot program at a leading cardiac hospital in Ireland to begin in May 2019.

Conclusions:
By bridging the gap between science and business, INJOY demonstrates an effective pedagogy for teaching nutrition science to multi-disciplinary teams tasked with creating novel health applications and citizen-centric approaches for modifying behaviour. The subsequent funding for the INJOY second-place winning project suggests that this model for teaching entrepreneurship and innovation can be leveraged to train individuals in transforming evidence-based research into health-promoting business models and to increase the potential for investment and further acceleration.

Keywords: Summer school, healthy ageing, innovation, nutrition, food technology.