

Sight and Life Elevator Pitch Contest 2018

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Imagine a chance meeting with an investor in an elevator, the perfect moment to quickly share your idea in a compelling manner to a captive audience. This situation gave rise to the term 'elevator pitch' – a very popular, interactive approach whereby an entrepreneur must boil down their concept into a persuasive pitch that will spark interest from potential financiers. "I thought it was really interesting to make the pitch in five minutes: it had to be really concise and deliver an idea quickly," explains Elevator Pitch Contest finalist Anne-Julie Tessier.

Nutrition assessment

The *Sight and Life* Elevator Pitch Contest 2018 sought disruptive ideas in nutrition assessment from innovators to change the current way nutrition is measured. Whether a cutting-edge product, a service, a technology, or an application in nutrition assessment, the concept needed to improve the existing approaches in a meaningful way.

“The concept needed to improve the existing approaches in a meaningful way”

Here at *Sight and Life*, we are striving to improve the assessment and evaluation of an individual's nutritional status. Nu-

tritional deficiencies are major public health concerns in many low- and middle-income countries, but accurate and actionable information on their status in populations is often lacking due to the high costs and logistical challenges associated with assessing nutritional status. Accurate, user-friendly and low-cost analytical tools allowing large-scale population surveys on nutritional status are needed.

The competition

Open to young entrepreneurs, the contest drew 65 entries from 18 countries and 35 universities across diverse categories and stages. The distinguished Jury Panel brought their immense knowledge, experience and expertise in nutrition assessment to narrow the group of 65 applicants down to seven finalists. Our thanks go to all the Jury members:

Klaus Kraemer from *Sight and Life*

Simone Frey from Atlantic Food Labs

Katharine Kreis from PATH

Alain Labrique from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Parul Christian from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Karen Regan from National Institutes of Health

The seven finalists were awarded a round trip to Boston, where they presented their innovations during The American Society for Nutrition's Nutrition 2018 conference. Before the competition, each of the finalists had the opportunity to receive mentoring and feedback regarding their concept and presentation. Maryam Hashemian, an elevator pitch contest finalist, spoke highly of her experience: "It was a great opportunity for me to communicate my idea, to talk about it and to learn from other colleagues about how to improve it and how to connect with others to improve the idea."



Eleanor Shonkoff from the Picture This! team pitching her nutrition assessment innovation

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“It was invigorating to watch these young entrepreneurs pitch their innovations”

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It was invigorating to watch these young entrepreneurs pitch their innovations, which have the potential to change the landscape of nutrition assessment. Jury member Simone Frey describes the atmosphere during the competition: “What I find most interesting is that there are so many people with ideas, and they have seen there are problems that we can actually solve.” She continues, “They’ve come up with great solutions. And this elevator pitch contest helps to go the next step, to bring it to the next level, to network, to bring these people together with maybe mentors, with investors, and I think that’s great.”

After an intense session of pitches followed by inquiries from the Jury, three contestants were awarded cash prizes.

The third-place winner is Andrea Spray, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with a dietary intake innovation called INATU that measures the impact of women’s time on nutrition. Spray aims to overcome the limitations of tools currently used in measuring the impact of women’s time on nutrition through a method that requires neither direct observation nor self-reporting. The team proposes to equip rural mothers in Uganda with life-logging wearable cameras, GPS trackers, and mobile phones receiving automated interactive voice response (IVR) calls to assess time use and maternal and child diet.

The second-place winner is Eleanor Shonkoff, from Tufts University, with Picture This! Shonkoff’s team proposes accurate estimation of individual-level food and nutrient intake through digital imaging of food, computer vision (CV), and artificial intelligence (AI) techniques. The aim is to develop a scientifically valid method by which consumers take pictures of their food and get rapid, real-time feedback on calories and nutrients consumed. The steps involved are to use images to classify foods, construct a 3-D model, estimate boundaries and volume, and determine the food’s weight and calories. The prototype algorithm draws from 3-D weight estimation techniques to determine object volume and uses machine learning algorithms to classify foods. The concept is at the prototype stage, and an early model has been built.

The winner of the 2018 Elevator Pitch Contest is Anne-Julie Tessier, from Canada’s McGill University. Tessier and her team tackle the lack of tools to accurately assess food and beverage intake among individuals. Her entry, Keenoa, is an artificial intelligence–based food diary. A mobile application captures participants’ eating habits to the nearest detail by enabling them to record food pictures, quantity, and the date and time of meals. This detailed information is directly linked to a clinical practitioner’s/researcher’s web application and is accessible in real time. The mobile and web applications developed from March 2016 to January 2018 are ready to be deployed in the field.

In addition to the three winners, *Sight and Life* selected the presentation and concept of Chikumbutso Chibwinja, an undergraduate student at Malawi’s Lilongwe University, for an honorary prize. At 22 years old, Chibwinja proposed a simple technique, called Arm Distance Technique (ADT), that measures the circumference of the arm to classify a person as obese, overweight, normal, or wasted. ADT eliminates the need for equipment or technical personnel and is intuitively simple to use. Impressed with his passion for nutrition, *Sight and Life* is providing Chibwinja with an educational grant to continue supporting him in his endeavors.

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This staging of the *Sight and Life* Elevator Pitch Contest brought lively competition and provided an opportunity for finalists to connect and further their ideas with a mentor. Finalist Timur Osadchiy sums it up by stating, “You have so much doubt about whether your idea is great or not. The Elevator Pitch Contest actually gave me the confidence that me and my team – we are heading in the right direction, and this will definitely work.” The combination of all seven finalists brought this contest to



Jury members Klaus Kraemer from *Sight and Life* and Simone Frey from Atlantic Food Labs present Anne-Julie Tessier of Keenoa with a first-place award



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Elevator Pitch Contest Finalists and Jury members with the *Sight and Life* team in Boston, USA. **From left:** Karen Regan, Julie Mortensen, Yana Manyuk, Peiman Milani, Katharine Kreis, Anne-Julie Tessier, Ethan Braun, Kesso Gabrielle van Zutphen, Maryam Hashemian, Madhavika Bajoria, Eva Monterrosa, Klaus Kraemer, Srujith Lingala, Timur Osadchiy, Andrea Spray, Nola Martin, Parul Christian, Simone Frey, Kalpana Beesabathuni and Eleanor Shonkoff.

life with their cutting-edge ideas, and we are looking forward to bright futures for all contestants:

Anne-Julie Tessier, Doctoral student,
McGill University, Canada – Keenoa

Andrea Spray, Doctoral student,
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK – INATU

Eleanor Shonkoff, Post-doctoral fellow,
Tufts University, USA – Picture This!

Maryam Hashemian, Post-doctoral fellow,
National Cancer Institute, USA – Salt Intake Measurement

Chikumbutso Chibwinja, Undergraduate student,
Lilongwe University, Malawi – ADT

Ethan Braun, Doctoral student,
Purdue University, USA – POWER

Timur Osadchiy, Doctoral student,
Newcastle University, UK – Intake 24

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“The Elevator Pitch Contest was a great opportunity for me to communicate my idea, to talk about it, and to learn from other colleagues about how to improve it and how to connect with others to take the idea further.”

Maryam Hashemian

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For more information, please visit
www.elevator-pitch-contest.org

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