

## MEDIA UPDATE

# Novartis announces winners of the Innovation Prize for Assistive Tech, rewarding new technologies that could improve mobility and independence of people living with multiple sclerosis

- *The Novartis Innovation Prize: Assistive Tech for Multiple Sclerosis (MS) was initiated in 2019 as part of a commitment to innovation in Neuroscience to identify and encourage technology ideas from all over the world with the aim to improve mobility, accessibility and daily life for people living with MS*
- *Canadian company AccessNow receives the first prize worth USD 250,000 for a mobile app and web platform that provides information about the accessibility status for people with disabilities of locations around the world, enabling them to move around with more confidence and ease*
- *Runner-up receiving USD 50,000 is the start-up Fly Parrots from the United States who developed Polly, a socially assistive robot with an inclusive user-friendly app so people with mobility and communication challenges can connect better with the world*
- *To support pioneering solutions for increased mobility and accessibility, Novartis worked with WIRED Brand Lab, alongside other key collaborators such as Selma Blair, representatives from Sequoia, Airbnb, Whill, Shift.ms, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and people living with MS*

**Basel, June 25, 2020** — “It is such an honor to be awarded the Novartis Innovation Prize. Accessibility is a critical component of establishing a welcoming and barrier-free world for people with disabilities, including those living with MS,” said Maayan Ziv, Founder and CEO AccessNow. “We have come a long way, but we have so much more to do to achieve equity and inclusion. At AccessNow we believe technology plays an integral role in achieving this vision and we are so excited for the next step in our journey.”

The runner-up is an intelligent plug-and-play device and app called Polly. It empowers people with mobility and communication challenges to be more connected with the world around them through features like safe navigation, 360-computer vision, smart home connectivity and more.

“The Novartis Innovation Prize represents a great opportunity to help the world understand the impact of living with multiple sclerosis, but also to explore how technology and innovation facilitates mobility and fosters connection for the MS community,” said Tim Coetzee, Chief Advocacy, Services, and Research Officer, National MS Society and a prize judge. “It is

inspiring to see the patient community, innovators, venture capital, large tech companies, and high impact technology come together and showcase the potential to improve the daily lives of those living with MS or other disabilities. Sustained collaboration and innovation in these diverse sectors are vital to ensure that the needs of these communities are being met.”

More information about the Novartis Innovation Prize winners and finalists is available at [www.wired.com/msinnovationprize](http://www.wired.com/msinnovationprize).

### **About the Innovation Prize**

The Novartis Innovation Prize: Assistive Tech for MS identifies and embraces technology that aims to improve the mobility, accessibility and activities of daily life for these individuals and others living with mobility-limiting conditions. Applications were open to the tech community, innovators, design experts and patient advocates worldwide — anyone with an idea to make everyday life better for those with MS or other mobility-limiting conditions. The prize judging panel consisted of a wide variety of experts including accessibility leaders, representatives from the MS patient community, investors, and consumer technology experts within the mobility and healthcare space.

### **About Multiple Sclerosis**

MS disrupts the normal functioning of the brain, optic nerves and spinal cord through inflammation and tissue loss<sup>1</sup>. MS, which affects approximately 2.3 million people worldwide<sup>2</sup>, is often characterized into three forms: primary progressive MS (PPMS)<sup>3</sup>, relapsing remitting MS (RRMS), and secondary progressive MS (SPMS), which follows from an initial RRMS course and is characterized by physical and cognitive changes over time, in presence or absence of relapses, leading to a progressive accumulation of neurological disability<sup>4</sup>. Approximately 85% of patients initially present with relapsing forms of MS<sup>2</sup>.

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### **About Novartis**

Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people's lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world's top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach nearly 800 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 109,000 people of more than 145 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at <https://www.novartis.com>.

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### **References**

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