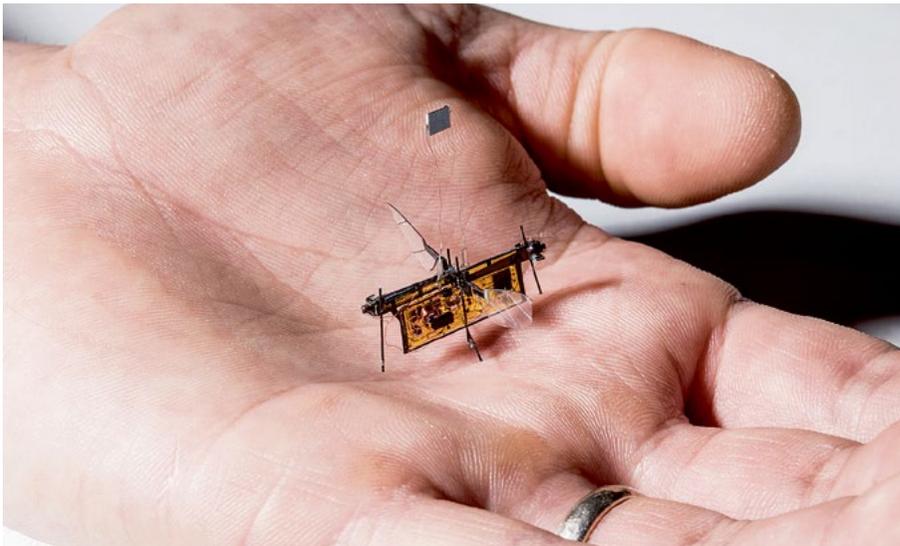


SFEE to Promote Greece as Hub for Clinical Trials

Clinical trials represent a great untapped opportunity for Greece according to the Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies (SFEE), which aims to promote the country as a regional hub for clinical trials. The move could “give fresh impetus both to public health and to the national economy,” SFEE said, pointing out that the country meets all the conditions for attracting and increasing investment in clinical research. SFEE underlined the importance of a coordinated approach by all parties involved and of working together to improve the institutional framework and streamline bureaucratic procedures. It added that Greece’s current share of the €30 billion invested in pharmaceutical research in Europe every year is much smaller than the shares of comparably sized countries.

Source: AMNA

Robotic Insect Takes Flight



Engineers at the University of Washington have created an independently flying robotic insect. Slightly heavier than a toothpick, the wireless RoboFly represents a giant leap for insect-sized flying robots. Too small to use propellers, these robots soar by fluttering tiny wings—but that’s a power-hungry process that meant previous robotic insects, such as the RoboBee, had a leash through which they were powered and controlled.

Unlike its predecessor, RoboFly is powered by a laser beam and uses a minuscule photovoltaic cell that converts the laser energy into electricity. It then uses a specially designed flexible circuit to boost the seven volts coming out of the photovoltaic cell up to the 240 volts needed for flight. The circuit is also equipped with a microcontroller that serves as the robot’s brain, telling the wings when to flap. RoboFly can currently only take off and land, but the team at UW believe that future versions could use tiny onboard batteries or even harvest energy from radio frequency signals. Future versions will also have more advanced brain and sensor systems, allowing the robotic insects to navigate and complete tasks on their own.

Source: www.washington.edu

GOOGLE UPS ITS AI GAME

Google’s new Duplex AI stammers, pauses, and sounds practically indistinguishable from a human. Unveiled at the company’s developer conference, Google I/O 2018, in early May, Duplex ushers in a new era of machine intelligence powered virtual assistants. Google’s CEO, Sundar Pichai, demonstrated the technology with a recording of two telephone conversations in which Google Assistant places calls to book an appointment at a hair salon and make dinner reservations at a restaurant. The voices in the clip, one female and one male, sounded completely human, with natural inflection, pitch, and speech patterns. Neither of the humans that answered the calls knew they were talking to a digital personal assistant.

AI’s capability to interact seamlessly with humans on a deeper level certainly has a long way to go, but this demonstration has made clear that we’ve reached a tipping point. For now, the assistant can be used for simple, rudimentary interactions, but there is no doubt that the technology has arrived.

Google will be rolling out an updated Google Assistant with Duplex support to certain users over the summer.

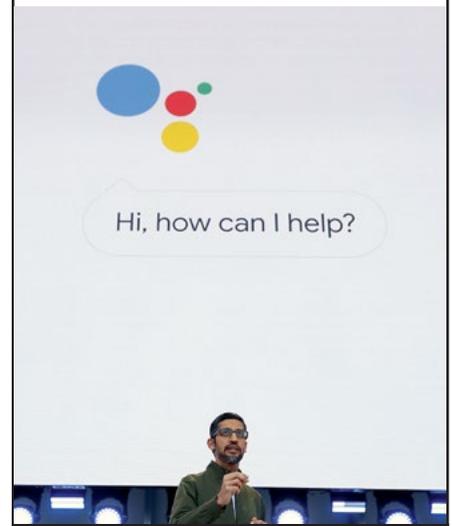


PHOTO BY JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES



CHEFS LEFTERIS LAZAROU, STELIOS PARIAROS AND CHRISTOFOROS PESKIAS

Greek Cuisine Soars

Aegean Airlines has joined forces with three celebrated Greek chefs—Lefteris Lazarou, Christoforos Peskias and Stelios Parliaros—to create a business class menu that showcases contemporary Greek gastronomy. Naming the initiative Gastronomics, the airline has set out to promote Greece’s culinary traditions and unique wines around the world. The company’s aim is to give passengers the opportunity to experience the flavors and aromas of Greece. To do this, the initiative will deliver a menu of over 40 dishes using local products and wines from across Greece. Aegean’s collaboration with the three chefs will continue through 2018.

Aegean Airlines is celebrated as Europe’s Leading Regional Airline at the World Travel Awards and named Best Regional Airline in Europe by Skytrax.



Europe for the Bees

The European Union will ban the world’s most widely used insecticides from all fields in a bid to protect honeybees, wild bees and other pollinators. On April 27, 2018, EU member states voted in favor of a near-total ban on neonicotinoid

insecticides that is set to come into force by the end of 2018. The three banned substances—imidacloprid developed by Bayer CropScience, clothianidin developed by Takeda Chemical Industries and Bayer CropScience, and thiamethoxam developed by Syngenta—will be completely banned from all outdoor use, with use permitted only in permanent greenhouses where exposure of bees is not expected. Other neonicotinoids, such as thiacloprid developed by Bayer CropScience, continue to be exempt from the ban. Neonicotinoids are nerve agents shown to cause a wide range of harm to individual bees, including reducing queen numbers and damaging colonies.

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www.nih.gov

CONSUMERS GET A RUBY TREAT

Consumers in Europe are finally getting a taste of Ruby chocolate, as the first pink bars hit the market this past April. The world’s first new type of chocolate in over 80 years, Ruby chocolate was unveiled in Shanghai in September 2017. KitKat was the first consumer brand to market the new chocolate variety, debuting its pink bars in Japan and South Korea in January 2018. Ruby chocolate has been developed by Barry Callebaut, the world’s leading cocoa processor, and holds the promise of appealing to increasingly demanding, health conscious consumers looking for fresh, more interesting products.