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# IISER Pune team wins gold at the iGEM 2020 synthetic biology competition

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PUNE: A team of 14 students from Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Pune who competed at the 2020 international Genetically Engineered Machines (iGEM) contest, have won a gold medal at the International Giant Jamboree held virtually during November 13-22, 2020. The team also bagged the iGEMer's award, meaning they were officially voted the best undergraduate team project by all the other teams in the competition, said an official release from IISER, Pune.

The iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) competition is an international competition organized to give high school and collegiate students a platform to use synthetic biology to tackle real life problems

facing the world today.

Describing the challenge, the official release said, "The IISER Pune team worked on developing a multi-faceted approach towards eradicating Malaria. They aimed to develop a library of protein-based therapeutics to combat the disease and a simple, cheap and efficient diagnostic kit along with an awareness campaign aimed at informing the public about the methods of prevention and cure. "

Explaining the work behind the win, the release further said, "Working over 8 months, the team computationally designed short

protein sequences that could be orally delivered as medication to stop the spread of Malaria in the human body. The team's diagnostic kit consisted of an easy to use software that they developed with an accuracy of 95.45% that uses images of blood smears to detect Malaria. These images can be cheaply and easily obtained using the existing technologies of a Foldscope (a foldable microscope) and a Paper Centrifuge which cumulatively cost under 100 rupees."