

Business

Collaborations

Isogenica and AstraZeneca

Isogenica (<http://www.isogenica.com>) has announced its entry into a research collaboration with AstraZeneca (<http://www.isogenica.com>) to assess the utility of Isogenica's CIS-display technology for the discovery of biologically active polypeptides that are specific for targets provided by AstraZeneca.

The CIS-display technology developed by Isogenica, which was formed in December 2000 to develop and commercialize innovative *in vitro* molecular evolution technologies, is an *in vitro* display technology that provides a novel and effective method for the rapid identification of compounds that bind with high-affinity and high-specificity to any given molecular target.

Kevin Fitzgerald, CEO of Isogenica, commented: 'We look forward to building a strong relationship with AstraZeneca and in assisting them with their drug discovery activities. This collaboration provides further evidence of the wide range of applications that are addressable using Isogenica's molecular evolution technologies and of Isogenica's appetite for forming partnerships with high quality companies within our industry.'

CIS-display technology exploits the high-affinity interaction between a DNA binding protein (RepA) and its DNA recognition sequence (ORI), a property called cis-activity. CIS-display can be widely applied to the discovery and development process, in the discovery of new antibody, peptide and polypeptide drug candidates, in the discovery of high-specificity diagnostic compounds and in the isolation of target validation and other research reagents.

CFFT awards US\$21 million to Vertex Pharmaceuticals

Vertex Pharmaceuticals (<http://www.vrtx.com>) has announced an expansion of its drug discovery and development collaboration with Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Therapeutics (CFFT; <http://www.cff.org/index.cfm>), the nonprofit drug discovery and development affiliate of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Under the expanded agreement, Vertex Pharmaceuticals will receive approximately US\$21 million in contracted research payments made by CFFT through 2004 and 2005, which will fund Vertex's late-stage cystic fibrosis (CF) drug discovery effort. In addition, CFFT will issue Vertex with a milestone payment on the advancement of the first compound into clinical development.

President and CEO of the CF foundation and CFFT, Robert J. Beall, said: '... Vertex has enabled the rapid design of small molecule compounds, that, in laboratory studies, have corrected the defective ion transport in CF and therefore may address the root cause of disease. By expanding our collaboration with Vertex, we are assuring that these compounds move forward quickly and prudently...'

Vertex Pharmaceuticals is a global biotechnology company that is committed to the discovery and development of breakthrough small molecule drugs for serious diseases. As part of a collaboration with the CF foundation, Vertex initiated its research in CF in May 2000, focusing on the design of selective ion channel modulators that could restore the function of defective CF transmembrane conductance regulator protein, which is a key factor in the symptoms, complications and mortality in people suffering from CF.

Funding

PIERIS receives €2 million grant

PIERIS (<http://www.pieris-ag.de>) has triumphed in the BioChance PLUS competition, a programme instigated in 2003 by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF; <http://www.bmbf.de>) to support medium-sized biotech companies. PIERIS was chosen as one of the first six companies in Germany to receive this award based on its Anticalin® research programme. The company will receive €2 million over a period of two years.

The award will enable PIERIS to validate therapeutic Anticalins® in preclinical development and to develop manufacturing processes against several biological targets in oncology and cardiovascular diseases. PIERIS has generated high-affinity and high-specificity Anticalins®, which are lipocalin muteins, against many protein and hapten targets.

In addition, the therapeutic efficacy of Anticalins® against Digoxin overdosing has been demonstrated in a preclinical study.

Martin Pöhlchen, CEO, said: 'We are delighted that we have received this important grant from the BMBF. This will accelerate our internal product development to file our first IND by the end of 2005...'

Claus Schalper, Vice President of Finance, added: 'The grant will not only strengthen PIERIS' financial position but serves as a further validation of the potential of our Anticalin®-technology.'

DanioLabs wins funding for breakthrough research

DanioLabs (<http://www.daniolabs.com>) has been awarded US\$400,000 funding by the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI; <http://www.sbri.org.uk>) to progress its research into novel compounds for the treatment of drug addiction. In 1992, the cost of drug abuse in the US was estimated to be US\$245.7 billion but, today, this figure is thought to be considerably higher. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA; <http://www.nida.nih.gov>) has highlighted the lack of medications for the treatment of addiction to stimulants such as cocaine and anabolic steroids.

The significant medical need for therapeutic treatments for drug addiction is highlighted by the example of Zyban, which is a reprofiled compound that has been used to treat smoking addiction. DanioLabs demonstrated that its screening system would have identified Zyban and intend to investigate this further to identify more efficacious drugs.

DanioLabs' Chief Scientific Officer and clinical neurologist, Paul Goldsmith, stated: 'We have seen in our other programs that we can rapidly discover candidate drugs with proven clinically relevant effects. We now have the opportunity to build on our pilot work on addiction.'

DanioLabs is a UK-based therapeutics company that uses its world-leading phenotype driven drug discovery technologies to identify novel treatments for a variety of human diseases.

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