NEW SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES JOIN TI PHARMA BY SIGNING TWO NEW PROJECTS

6 July, 2009 - Three new small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Syncom, Synvolux Therapeutics and InteRNA Technologies, have joined the public-private partnership TI Pharma by participating in two new projects. The two projects, focusing on cancer and inflammatory diseases, have a total budget of nearly 6 million euro.

The new consortium formed by Syncom, Synvolux Therapeutics, and University Medical Center Groningen focuses on designing a versatile drug delivery system for inflammatory diseases and cancer. Another new consortium is formed by InteRNA Technologies, Utrecht University and VU University Medical Center, and focuses on the development of anti-angiogenic microRNA-based therapeutic products for the treatment of cancer.

Versatile drug delivery platform for inflammatory diseases and cancer
New molecular entities (NME) in the drug development pipeline comprise various classes of kinase inhibitors that cause unacceptable toxicity in humans. Proper formulation might circumvent side-effects and improve their general therapeutic efficacy. However, currently, no appropriate formulation technology is available for these kinase inhibitors.

This project focuses on a systematic approach in which chemical modification of NME is combined with drug formulation studies. This will lead to a versatile drug delivery platform for the future clinical application of the kinase inhibitors in the treatment of cancer and chronic inflammatory diseases. *"This approach is expected to make targeted drug delivery finally meet its expectations, as it will become available for a variety of drug classes that are under development by the pharmaceutical industry,"* according to the consortium members.

Development of novel anti-angiogenic miRNA based therapeutics
"Conventional cancer treatment such as surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy are far from sufficient and therefore new strategies of cancer treatment are needed more than ever," says Roel Schaapveld, Chief Executive Officer, InteRNA. There is a large body of evidence indicating that tumor growth and metastasis formation are dependent on the formation of new blood vessels. Furthermore, angiogenesis is an early event in the development of tumors, being already switched on in pre-cancerous events and long before visible or clinically relevant tumor mass is present. Schaapveld: *"These two features make angiogenesis an ideal target for the development of novel anti-cancer strategies."*

The recent discovery that non-coding RNAs, called microRNAs (miRNAs), play a critical role in gene regulation provides new opportunities to discover RNAs that can control angiogenesis. The major aim of this project is to establish a technology platform for the development of (anti-cancer) therapeutics based on angiostatic miRNAs. miRNA is utilized as a therapeutic modality and advanced nanoparticle delivery systems accomplish intracellular delivery of nucleic acid agents. These will be combined with the identification of surface receptor targets on tumor blood vessels to allow for therapeutic intervention. Eventually, this will result in the development of anti-angiogenic miRNA-based therapeutic products for the treatment of cancer.

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InteRNA Technologies B.V. actively explores and exploits opportunities to translate its unique collection of miRNAs and miRNA discovery and validation technologies into successful diagnostic, prognostic and therapeutic applications. The company's primary focus is to unravel the role of its proprietary miRNAs in cancer.
InteRNA Technologies was incorporated in 2006 by Aglaia Oncology Fund and has established close relationships with the research groups of its founders Edwin Cuppen, PhD, and Eugene Berezikov, PhD, of the Hubrecht Institute (Utrecht, the Netherlands), leading scientific groups in the field of miRNA research. For more information, visit www.interna-technologies.com.

Syncom is a contract research organization that specializes in all aspects of organic synthesis. Syncom focuses on synthetic chemistry support for mainly medicinal chemistry and chemical development groups. Areas of expertise include asymmetric synthesis, vitamine D and steroid syntheses and heterocyclic chemistry. About 95% of the current work is done for the pharmaceutical industry and the other 5% for companies interested in materials. As of 2008, Syncom employs over a 100 chemists, 60% of whom have Ph.D. degrees whereas the others have masters degrees or equivalent. The growth rate the past 3 years has been 10% per year. For more information, visit www.syncom.nl.

Synvolux Therapeutics B.V. is a privately held Dutch company dedicated to the development, production and commercialisation of new therapies using its SAINT technology: a unique, safe and highly efficacious delivery technology for macromolecules (DNA, RNA, proteins and others). Synvolux sells its products for R&D use under Qiagen and Lonza brandnames. Synvolux Therapeutics uses its SAINT nanotechnology for the delivery of drugs based on synthetic, non-toxic chemical compounds. Synvolux develops novel products with designed features to meet the needs of drug development partners. Synvolux' compounds promise to improve the potential of gene therapy, circumventing the dangers of viral delivery and the inefficiency of other approaches. For more information, visit www.synvolux.nl.

Within **TI Pharma**, consortia of industrial and academic research teams conduct groundbreaking, cross-disciplinary research projects that fit into the Priority Medicines program of the WHO. Each year, the Dutch government funds the top institute to a tune of 30 million Euros. The pharmaceutical industry and academia each contribute an additional 15 million Euros per year. TI Pharma is becoming an international leader in (bio)pharmaceutical research, training and education. TI Pharma's fellows are trained in understanding the intricacies of the entire drug R&D process. For further information, visit www.tipharma.com

The **University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG)** is the only university medical center in the northern part of the Netherlands, and therefore the final point of referral for many patients. Research at the UMCG is characterized by a combination of fundamental and patient orientated clinical research. The interaction between these two stimulates the development of new clinical and research opportunities. Problems that occur in the clinical practice act as a catalyst which sets new fundamental research in motion, while fundamental research can come up with new clinical possibilities. The UMCG focuses on healthy aging in all priority areas: research, clinical care and education. The healthy aging-related research is bundled in the Institute of Healthy Aging. This institute forms the shell in which the healthy aging activities are embedded, i.e. the cohort study LifeLines, the UMCG Center for Geriatric Medicine (UCO) and the future European Research Institute on the Biology of Ageing (ERIBA).

Utrecht University is one of Europe's leading research universities recognized internationally for its high-quality approach to both research and teaching. Founded in 1636, Utrecht University has always focused strongly on research. Thanks to its solid basis in discipline-based scholarship, it is at the forefront of developments in interdisciplinary knowledge in fields ranging from biochemistry and biophysics to human rights and cultural studies. Utrecht University holds the 42nd position in the Shanghai rankings of the world's top universities. With this position, Utrecht is ranked number one in the Netherlands and seventh in Europe. For further information, visit www.uu.nl.

The scientific research and patient care of **VU University Medical Center** are based on five pivotal points, each one including patient care, training, educational programs and research. The lines of scientific research within each of the pivotal points are brought together in a multidisciplinary research institute. The pivotal points and associated research institutes in VU University Medical Center are:

- cancer and immunology (Cancer Center Amsterdam – VU University Medical Center Institute for Cancer and Immunology)
- brain (Neuroscience Campus Amsterdam)
  vital functions (Institute for Cardiovascular Research)
- extramural and transmural (Institute for Research in Extramural Medicine)
- movement (MOVE is an inter-faculty joint venture between VU University Medical Center, the Faculty of Human Movement Sciences and the Academic Center for Dentistry Amsterdam).

VU University Medical Center holds a top 3 position in the Dutch scientific research rankings.