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Health Professional News

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Roche Diagnostics announces agreement with Hannover Medical School for Growth-Differentiation Factor-15 (GDF-15) cardiac test

Roche Diagnostics, Hannover Medical School, and Ascenion today announced the signing of an exclusive license agreement which provides Roche with worldwide rights for patents related to the use of Growth-Differentiation Factor-15 (GDF-15) in the area of cardiovascular diseases.

Growth-Differentiation Factor-15 (GDF-15), which is also known as Macrophage Inhibitory Cytokine-1 (MIC-1), is a member of the Transforming Growth Factor- β (TGF- β) cytokine superfamily, and is induced in the myocardium in response to ischemia and reperfusion injury or in cardiac failure. In experimental models, GDF-15 appears to exhibit cardioprotective effects in various pathological conditions. Serum or plasma levels of GDF-15 are increased in patients with different forms of cardiac dysfunction or heart failure. GDF-15 has been shown to provide prognostic information in patients with acute coronary syndromes or heart failure which is independent from N-terminal pro-B-type natriuretic peptide (NT-proBNP) and cardiac troponin, suggesting that GDF-15 provides insight into a distinct pathophysiological mechanism. Recent studies in patients with acute coronary syndromes indicate that circulating concentrations of GDF-15 can be used for effective risk and treatment stratification. Patients presenting with elevated levels of GDF-15 derive substantial benefit from early coronary intervention and revascularization. In patients with atrial fibrillation, GDF-15 represents the underlying cardiac dysfunction in contrast to natriuretic peptides which are strongly elevated in these patients.

"Hannover Medical School is proud to have pioneered the clinical development of GDF-15. We strongly believe that GDF-15 will add important information in the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac diseases beyond established markers and clinical information", said Professor Kai C. Wollert from the Department of Cardiology and Angiology at Hannover Medical School who developed GDF-15 as a new cardiac marker together with Professor Lars Wallentin from Uppsala Clinical Research Center in Sweden.

"The addition of GDF-15 to our cardiac marker portfolio is an important step to a multimarker approach in cardiovascular diseases which will lead to a better understanding of these diseases, improved treatment and survival" said Dirk Ehlers, Head of Roche Professional Diagnostics.

The license agreement was mediated by Ascenion, the exclusive marketing partner of Hannover Medical School.

About Hannover Medical School

The Hannover Medical School, founded in 1965, is one of the world's leading university medical centres. Its research and patient care set national and international standards. The Hannover Medical School is also part of an excellent regional medical network.

The outstanding success in interdisciplinary collaboration both within the MHH and with extramural scientific institutions is reflected in the fact that the MHH is the German medical university with the greatest volume of grant funding.

About Ascenion GmbH

Ascenion GmbH is an IP asset management company focused on the life sciences. Ascenion advises and supports public research institutions with regard to the protection and exploitation of their intellectual property (patents, know-how, materials), and initiates and mediates license agreements between research institutions and industry. The company places particular emphasis on coaching company founders and on active equity management. Ascenion was founded in 2001 as a 100% subsidiary of the Life-Science Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Research and has since acquired 12 research institutes in the

Helmholtz and Leibniz Associations and also Hannover Medical School as exclusive partners. Ascenion currently markets around 600 technologies on behalf of these institutes, and closes an average of about 60 agreements between research and industry per year. The team has also coached numerous spin-offs through their foundation and early growth and Ascenion holds equity in 16 of these companies. Ascenion's headquarters are in Munich, with further offices in Berlin, Braunschweig, Hamburg, Hannover, and Neuherberg. Further information is available at www.ascenion.de

About Roche

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world's leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As the world's biggest biotech company and an innovator of products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, the Group contributes on a broad range of fronts to improving people's health and quality of life. Roche is the world leader in in-vitro diagnostics and drugs for cancer and transplantation, and is a market leader in virology. It is also active in other major therapeutic areas such as autoimmune diseases, inflammatory and metabolic disorders and diseases of the central nervous system. In 2007 sales by the Pharmaceuticals Division totalled 36.8 billion Swiss francs, and the Diagnostics Division posted sales of 9.3 billion francs. Roche has R&D agreements and strategic alliances with numerous partners, including majority ownership interests in Genentech and Chugai, and invested over 8 billion Swiss francs in R&D in 2007. Worldwide, the Group employs about 80,000 people. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.roche.com.

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