



Novel Diagnostics



bioMérieux to assess potential of PlasmAcute[®] Technology for tuberculosis testing

Acute phase antibody detection could lead to faster tuberculosis diagnosis

Bergen, October 25, 2004. Novel Diagnostics ASA and bioMérieux announced today that they have signed an agreement that gives bioMérieux access to patented PlasmAcute[®] acute phase antibody detection technology for use in the field of tuberculosis detection.

Tuberculosis is a major worldwide problem, claiming between two and three million lives every year, and there is a need to replace the current tests with a high specificity and more sensitive reagent during the early stage of the disease.

Under the agreement, bioMérieux gains the right to evaluate how Novel's PlasmAcute technology could form the basis for a rapid TB detection test. By disrupting the B-lymphocytes, PlasmAcute technology allows immunological responses to be detected before there is any rise in circulating antibody levels. This means responses can be detected well in advance of standard ELISA-based systems, and even before nucleic acid testing can be used effectively. As PlasmAcute-based assays can be run on standard ELISA automated plate readers, this simplifies the adoption of the technology and removes the need for laboratories to invest in new instrumentation.

Commenting on the agreement, Christian Horn, CEO of Novel Diagnostics ASA, said, "PlasmAcute technology offers diagnostics manufacturers the opportunity to improve the performance of their assays by not only narrowing the time-span between the initial infection and start of a detectable immunological response but also clearly identifying the acute phase of an infection. We are pleased that such a leading player like bioMérieux has shown interest in exploring its capabilities in such a key area as tuberculosis."

Benoît Adelus, Executive Vice President of bioMérieux added, "When combined with our own expertise in infectious disease and tuberculosis testing, PlasmAcute technology appears to offer us a simple way to further improve the sensitivity and performance of our assays."

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For more information contact

Kevin Payne
Director
De Facto Communications, London
Tel: +44 207 940 1031
Mobile: +44 7976 534517
Email: k.payne@defacto.com

Christelle Chabert
Press Relations
bioMérieux SA
Tel: +33 4 78 87 52 01

Email: christelle.chabert@eu.biomerieux.com

Christian Horn
CEO Novel Diagnostics
Tel: +47 55 54 39 65
Mobile: +47 90 16 31 53
Email: ch@noveldiagnostics.com

About Novel Diagnostics

- Novel Diagnostics current focus lies on early diagnosis of infectious diseases and colorectal cancer, with the *PlasmAcute* and *Genefec* technologies, respectively.

Diagnosis of infectious diseases in their early stage and identifying the acute phase of an infection is crucial for successful treatment and in limiting the spread of disease. However, for many infections - including HIV and hepatitis - a time lapse exists between initial infection and the detection of antibodies. Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) has been shown to narrow this time gap, known as the window phase. Our clinical tests suggest that *PlasmAcute* matches or surpasses the NAT technology platform in this capacity.

Colorectal cancer is common among men and women aged fifty and over. Moreover, the cancer has a high mortality rate – it is the second most common cause of death due to cancer in the Western World. Fortunately, the progression of colorectal cancer to a serious state is preventable through early diagnosis. The *Genefec* method, which is a genetic, non-invasive test for the detection of sporadic colorectal cancer in stool, can detect premalignant colorectal cancer cases years before actual cancer has developed allowing for early treatment of the disease.

About bioMérieux

bioMérieux is a leading international diagnostics group that specialises in the field of *in vitro* diagnostics for clinical and industrial applications. bioMérieux designs, develops, manufactures and markets systems (i.e. reagents, instruments and software) used in:

Clinical applications: the diagnosis of infectious diseases such as hepatitis, HIV, tuberculosis and respiratory illnesses, as well as pathologies such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer, based on the analysis of biological samples (such as blood, saliva or urine); and

Industrial applications: the microbiological analysis of food, environments (such as water and air), surfaces and pharmaceutical and cosmetic products, based on the analysis of product or environmental samples. bioMérieux has pioneered this business and is world leader.

In 2003, eighty two percent of the company's sales are international. The company is present in more than 130 countries through 33 subsidiaries and a large network of distributors, which positions the company well to benefit from the growth potential of the *in vitro* diagnostics market. Some important drivers that underpin this growth are aging populations and age-related illness, illnesses related to life-style and eating habits, the emerging new pathogens, the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, the fight against bio-terrorism, the recognition of the importance of the quality of food products, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

bioMérieux is listed on the Premier Marché of Euronext, Paris (FR0010096479 – BIM).