



For Immediate Release

Merix Bioscience Announces Agreement with Geron Corporation for Development of Cancer Vaccines

Joint Efforts Could Yield Significant Future Improvements in Treatment of Cancer

Durham, N.C., March 11, 2004 – Durham-based MERIX Bioscience, a company pioneering therapeutic cancer vaccines, has signed a joint licensing agreement with California-based Geron Corporation. The agreement could propel clinical progress and yield faster commercialization of therapeutic cancer vaccines. Clinical testing utilizing the combined technologies is ongoing at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, NC.

In exchange for five million shares of Geron stock, valued at over \$43 million, Merix will allow Geron the use of its platform technology for modifying dendritic cells to present one or more defined antigens in order to provoke an anti-tumor immune response. Merix retains co-exclusive rights to use the platform technology with defined antigens other than Geron's telomerase antigen and exclusive rights to use it with total tumor RNA and other uncharacterized antigens.

Merix's platform technology has been validated in several clinical trials at Duke, including the ongoing trial which combines Merix's antigen delivery technology with the telomerase antigen. "This validation of our technology is especially encouraging as we begin our initial corporate clinical trial using total tumor RNA in metastatic renal cell carcinoma in North America," said Clint G. (Skip) Dederick, Jr., Chairman and CEO of Merix. "We believe that utilizing all of the patient's tumor antigens (i.e., "total tumor RNA") has the unique advantage of inducing the broadest possible immune response, maximizing the chance of effective anti-tumor responses."

The technology used by Merix involves extracting RNA from a cancer patient's tumor, combining it with dendritic cells also removed from the patient, and reintroducing the now "personalized vaccine" back into the patient. This stimulates the patient's own immune system to recognize and fight the specific cancer residing within his/her body. This methodology enables targeted cancer treatment which has so far proven to be both potent and remarkably free of adverse side effects. The process is by far more tolerable than alternative treatments currently available such as chemotherapy or surgical intervention, according to researchers.

Merix Technology: Forging New Ground

Merix's technology is not limited to its dendritic cell platform technology or cancer. "While the deal with Geron does serve to further validate the value of therapeutic cancer vaccine efforts, Merix will continue other pursuits supported by its technology platform as well as other technologies currently being investigated," Dederick says.

“In addition to oncology, Merix has strategically accessed a broad range of immunotherapy technologies with applications in antivirals, autoimmunity and transplantation rejection. For this reason, we have limited the scope of the license with Geron to allow us unfettered use in these areas with the benefit of sharing intellectual property with Geron to further develop the underlying platform.”

Merix’s comprehensive expertise in dendritic cell biology has led to the development of novel approaches to treatment for a broad spectrum of immune-mediated diseases. Charles Nicolette, Ph.D., Merix’s Vice President of Research and Development, adds, “Currently, our product pipeline includes potential treatments for such diverse life-threatening diseases as HIV and Lupus, and we are moving toward initial clinical trials in both.”

About Merix

Merix Bioscience, Inc. – a privately held company headquartered in Durham, North Carolina, and with additional operations in Erlangen, Germany – is dedicated to becoming a market leader in the field of immunotherapy. Utilizing proprietary technology and proven therapeutic methods and expertise in dendritic cell biology, Merix is developing the next generation of therapies in the areas of oncology, infectious diseases, autoimmune disorders and transplantation. Merix’s initial total tumor RNA-loaded dendritic cell vaccine is currently in a corporate Phase I/II clinical trial for patients with metastatic renal cell carcinoma.

About Geron

Geron is a biopharmaceutical company focused on developing and commercializing therapeutic and diagnostic products for cancer based on its telomerase technology, and cell-based therapeutics using its human embryonic stem cell technology.

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