



IAVI and Lentigen to Collaborate on Design of Novel AIDS Vaccine Candidate

NEW YORK, NY and GAITHERSBURG, MD, April 22, 2010 — The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and Lentigen today announced a collaboration to design a preventive AIDS vaccine based on Lentigen's technology. The candidate AIDS vaccine will be devised to safely mimic biological aspects of HIV infection and tested first in pre-clinical studies as part of an initial 18-month agreement. Lentigen's technology relies on a synthetic version of a virus related to HIV that has been engineered, along with other safety modifications, to be incapable of inserting itself into the human genome.

Some of the most effective vaccines used in humans are live but attenuated versions of disease-causing viruses—viruses that, in other words, have been rendered incapable of causing disease. But this approach is considered too risky for HIV vaccine development. Scientists fear that attenuated HIV might mutate and become pathogenic again, or insert itself into the genome and do so later. The use of Lentigen's technology could, however, allow researchers to come remarkably close to the live-attenuated strategy without raising such concerns.

"We believe that this prototype vaccine has the potential to generate the protective immune responses seen with experimental live-attenuated viruses, but without their pathogenic effects," said Dr. Boro Dropulic, Chief Scientific Officer and a founder of Lentigen.

The collaboration is a part of IAVI's Innovation Fund, a program launched to support the application of novel and unconventional technologies to AIDS vaccine design and development, and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Lentigen's technology fits that category. It is based on the lentivirus, a family of viruses that counts HIV among its members, making it a promising platform on which to create a safe, synthetic mimic of HIV. Lentiviral vectors also have the advantage of being among the most efficient vehicles for delivering genes to mammalian cells. Further, if used for an AIDS vaccine, the modified lentivirus is expected to target the right tissues to protect from HIV infection and to stimulate a robust immune response.

Under the agreement, Lentigen will initially develop a proof-of-concept version of the vaccine against the Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV), so that its safety and ability to provoke an immune response can be evaluated in an animal model. The results of this first set of experiments will determine how the parties move forward with the development and testing of an HIV version of this candidate vaccine.

"Lentigen's approach builds on promising technology from the gene delivery field applied to the challenge of HIV vaccine development," said Hansi Dean, Director of New Alliances and Initiatives at IAVI. "Biotechs like Lentigen can play a key role in advancing AIDS vaccine research, and we are excited to partner with the company on the development of a candidate that could advance the field forward."

Tim Ravenscroft, CEO of Lentigen and a scientist with extensive experience in the field of HIV research, said that “the development of an effective AIDS vaccine would drastically alter the course of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.”

IAVI’s Innovation Fund targets primarily small- and medium-sized biotechnology companies, proactively seeking out and financing nascent technologies that could help solve some of the major technical and scientific hurdles facing AIDS vaccine science, and that could ultimately lead to the development of novel vaccines. The Fund has an initial three-year commitment of US\$10 million, half of which is financed by a US\$5 million grant to IAVI from the Gates Foundation. The Innovation Fund is a component of IAVI’s extensive research and development infrastructure, which includes a global network of labs, three international research consortia comprised of leading HIV researchers and a network of state-of-the-art clinical research centers and supporting programs.

In the last ten years, IAVI and its partners have translated innovative technologies into seven vaccine candidates that have entered human trials in 11 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. Additionally, IAVI conducts non-interventional clinical research to inform vaccine design in partnership with research centers around the world.

About Lentigen Corporation

Lentigen Corporation is a privately owned biotechnology company focused on the development of lentiviral vector technology for a wide range of therapeutic, vaccine, and bioproduction applications. Lentiviral vectors are the most efficient vehicles for the delivery of genes or gene silencing sequences stably into cells. Lentigen is a highly collaborative company, co-developing Lentiviral vector-based products across a broad spectrum of bench to clinical applications. Collaborations include The National Institutes of Health, PATH, Expression Therapeutics, Epixis SA, The University of Pennsylvania, The University of Pittsburgh and The U.S. Army. For further information, visit www.lentigen.com.

About IAVI

The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) is a global not-for-profit organization whose mission is to ensure the development of safe, effective, accessible, preventive HIV vaccines for use throughout the world. Founded in 1996 and operational in 25 countries, IAVI and its network of collaborators research and develop vaccine candidates. In July 2009, IAVI received a four-star rating for the eighth consecutive year from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent evaluator of charities. In fact, nearly 90 percent of IAVI’s finances go exclusively toward ensuring the development of a safe, effective, preventive AIDS vaccine.

IAVI was founded with the generous support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Starr Foundation, and Until There’s A Cure Foundation. Other major supporters include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health, The John D. Evans Foundation, The New York Community Trust, the James B. Pendleton Charitable Trust; the Governments of Canada, Denmark, India, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the Basque Autonomous Government, the European Union as well as The City of New York, Economic Development Corporation; multilateral organizations such as The World Bank; corporate donors including BD (Becton, Dickinson & Co.), Bristol-Myers Squibb, Continental Airlines, Google Inc., Henry Schein, Inc., Pfizer Inc, and Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.; leading AIDS charities such as Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS; other private donors such as The Haas Trusts; and many generous individuals from around the world. For more information, see www.iavi.org.

Contact:

Lentigen, Tim Ravenscroft, tim.ravenscroft@lentigen.com; (609) 933-6187
IAVI, Rachel Steinhardt, rsteinhardt@iavi.org; 212-847-1045