



bioMérieux and ExonHit Therapeutics Extend their Strategic Collaboration

Development of blood diagnostics for the early detection of cancers

Marcy l'Etoile and Paris (France) October 13, 2005. bioMérieux and ExonHit announced today that they signed an agreement to extend their collaboration for six years for the discovery and development of new blood diagnostics in the area of early cancer detection.

These diagnostic tests are completely novel because they should enable the detection of cancer from a simple blood sample and at a very early stage, before clinical symptoms appear. The early detection of cancer is crucial in increasing the chance of successful therapy.

The alliance between bioMérieux and ExonHit was initiated in 2003 in connection with the development of a diagnostic test for breast cancer. The scope of the collaboration has now been enlarged to other types of cancers, including colon, prostate and lung cancers, for which a blood or tissue diagnostic is needed.

The objective of the extended collaboration is to develop DNA microarrays to detect genetic cancer markers in blood or tumour samples and is based on ExonHit's strong expertise and intellectual property in the field of gene expression combined with bioMérieux's know-how in the field of diagnostics.

Under the terms of the agreement, ExonHit grants bioMérieux an exclusive licence to use its technology and methods in the field of blood diagnostics, gene profiling and the design of microarrays.

In exchange, bioMérieux will fund ExonHit's R&D costs for each cancer studied. There will be a minimum of five research programmes. ExonHit will also receive milestone payments for each key-milestone that is reached as well as royalties on future product sales.

"This agreement with bioMérieux underlines ExonHit's strategy to capitalise on our dominant position in genome profiling and confirms our capability to create value, not only in the therapeutics field but also in the area of diagnostics," says Bruno Tocqué, CEO of ExonHit. "What bioMérieux and ExonHit are capable of achieving together is a real breakthrough in the field of cancer diagnostics. From a single drop of blood, it will be possible to detect the early signs of several types of cancer."

“This extended collaboration together with our already important technological portfolio, strengthens bioMérieux’s position as a player in oncology. Our objective is to develop genetic blood tests to enable the early detection of certain types of cancers and to improve the treatment and monitoring of the patient” comments Dr Christophe Mérieux, Senior Corporate Vice President, Research & Development, Medical Affairs at bioMérieux.

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About ExonHit Therapeutics

www.exonhit.com

ExonHit Therapeutic is the world’s leader in the analysis of alternative RNA splicing, a process which when deregulated plays a key role in the onset of various diseases.

ExonHit has a multi component commercial strategy to capture the maximum value from its leadership in alternative splicing. The Company is already generating revenues from a new generation of microarrays, “Splicearrays” that enable life science researchers to detect crucial disease-associated information. These products are marketed worldwide in conjunction with Agilent. In the field of diagnostics, ExonHit has a major collaboration with bioMérieux to develop completely novel predictive blood-based cancer diagnostics, which could play a key role in improving the treatment of breast and other major cancers.

In parallel, ExonHit is developing its own therapeutic pipeline in the field of neurodegenerative diseases and cancer. The Company has advanced drug candidates into clinical trials and is evaluating several promising pre-clinical compounds. ExonHit also has a strategic partnership with Allergan, to discover and develop new therapeutics in the areas of pain, neurological diseases and ophthalmology. This collaboration provides on-going research funding to ExonHit.

Founded in 1997, ExonHit is headquartered in Paris, France and has a US facility in Gaithersburg, MD.

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 softwares) 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.

In 2004, bioMérieux sales reached 931 million euros. 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, 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.

bioMérieux is listed on the Eurolist of Euronext, Paris (FR0010096479 – BIM). Other information can be found at www.biomerieux.com