



AUTOIMMUNE TECHNOLOGIES TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN \$3.8 MILLION NIH BIODEFENSE CHALLENGE GRANT RESEARCH

*Diagnostic tools for bioterror threat agents to be developed by
consortium including two New Orleans organizations*

NEW ORLEANS, November 9, 2005 - Autoimmune Technologies, LLC, a New Orleans biomedical company, will develop improved diagnostic tests for Lassa Fever and other hemorrhagic fevers in a government/industry partnership funded by a \$3.8 million grant recently awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The consortium receiving the award comprises Autoimmune Technologies and the Tulane University School of Medicine, both of New Orleans, the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases of Fort Detrick, Maryland (USAMRIID), Corgenix Medical Corporation of Denver, Colorado, and BioFactura Inc., of Rockville, Maryland. The principal investigator will be Dr. Robert F. Garry of Tulane, an internationally known virus expert. Autoimmune's work in the project will be led by Dr. Russell B. Wilson, the Chief Science Officer of the Company.

The grant was made under Department of Health and Human Services Biodefense Product Development Challenge Grant program RFA-AI-04-029, a key component of which is to stimulate the development of partnerships between government and industry. The diseases on which the grant is focused are hemorrhagic fevers caused by arenaviruses, which are potential bioterror agents.

Viral hemorrhagic fevers are widespread in parts of Africa, and they are debilitating and often fatal. An important factor in dealing with these serious diseases is the ability to diagnose them rapidly. Currently-available Lassa virus diagnostic tests require the use of dangerous live virus preparations during the manufacture of the test kits, and as a result the kits can only be manufactured in the handful of BSL-4 (Biosafety Level 4, or "spacesuit") biohazard laboratories which exist in the world today. The goal of the new grant is to develop viral diagnostic tests that can be routinely manufactured in standard production facilities and thereby dramatically reduce the cost and increase the availability of the tests.

The high cost and scarcity of the current tests are major impediments to routine clinical testing in the regions of the world where these viruses are endemic and to the ability of the U.S. and other countries to stockpile the tests for biodefense. The NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) points out that there is an urgent need for rapid, highly sensitive, specific, easy to use, and cost-effective diagnostics for laboratory and point-of-care use to identify or diagnose individuals exposed to biological threat agents. NIAID's Web site at http://www.niaid.nih.gov/biodefense/bandc_priority.htm has more information on many such threat agents.

Dr. Wilson described the role of Autoimmune Technologies in the forthcoming research this way: "We are very excited to be working with the world's leading experts on Lassa Fever to develop new tests for Lassa and other arenaviruses. This work will have a major impact on current healthcare in many countries while also vastly increasing the capability to detect the viruses in areas where they may be introduced as bioterror agents. Autoimmune's contribution to this project will be to help develop initial candidate versions of the diagnostic tests and to oversee the manufacture, field testing and commercialization of the final products."

Autoimmune Technologies is a privately held early-stage biomedical company. In addition to developing its own technologies, Autoimmune has licensed several proprietary breakthrough technologies from Tulane University School of Medicine and is working to make them commercially available to the medical community. More information about the Company can be found on its Web site, www.autoimmune.com. Autoimmune is currently in the process of relocating its offices and laboratory to 305 Baronne Street, Suite 1000, New Orleans, 70112 because of the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

USAMRIID is the lead medical research laboratory for the U.S. Biological Defense Research Program and plays a key role in national defense and in infectious disease research. The Institute's mission is to conduct basic and applied research on biological threats resulting in medical solutions (such as vaccines, drugs and diagnostics) to protect the warfighter. USAMRIID is a subordinate laboratory of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command.

Corgenix is a leader in the development and manufacturing of specialized diagnostic kits for immunology disorders, vascular diseases and bone and joint disorders. Corgenix diagnostic products are commercialized for use in clinical laboratories throughout the world.

BioFactura offers a broad range of process development and manufacturing services to customers and partners seeking to bring promising therapeutics, vaccines and diagnostics to the commercial markets. BioFactura is also developing technologies that will add value to biopharmaceuticals as they move from discovery through the clinic and into the marketplace.

Autoimmune's CEO, Michael D. Charbonnet, said that "Our firm is pleased indeed to be a part of the team which won this important biodefense grant. We believe that the award of the grant underscores the significance of the life sciences industry in New Orleans, and we eagerly anticipate the full recovery and future success of the people, companies, academic institutions and research centers that together make up this important sector of our local economy."

For further information, please visit www.autoimmune.com.

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