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Exiqon completes discovery phase of its diagnostic program for early detection of colorectal cancer in blood

Exiqon A/S (NASDAQ OMX: EXQ) today announced the completion of the discovery phase in its program for early detection of colorectal cancer (CRC) in blood . Exiqon and its partners at Copenhagen University, Aarhus University Hospital Skejby and Hvidovre Hospital have performed a two-phased discovery program in plasma samples from stage II/III CRC patients and age- and gender-matched colonoscopy-verified healthy controls.

The program is supported by a four-year grant from the Danish Advanced Technology Foundation.

In the discovery phase, an initial genome-wide screen in blood plasma profiling 730 individual microRNAs from 50 stage II cancers and 50 matched controls was followed by a profiling of 378 individual microRNAs in 120 stage II CRC, 50 stage III and 170 matched controls. The two screens have resulted in a list of candidate biomarker microRNAs that are statistically significantly altered between cancers and healthy volunteers.

The results have been submitted for presentation at a major oncology conference early in the second quarter of 2011.

Exiqon is already in the process of optimizing the assay that will be used to validate the discovered microRNA biomarkers in more than 5,000 blood samples which will be collected prospectively. The first validation is expected to be completed by the second half of 2011.

Colorectal cancer is one of the deadliest cancers as it is often not diagnosed until the disease is very advanced. However, if discovered early, the likelihood of successful treatment is very high. This calls for a simple blood-based screening test that routinely can be taken. Today, screening for colon cancer is primarily done by a FOBT test which detects blood in the stool or by colonoscopy, but both tests suffer from very low compliance due to the unpleasant nature of the tests.

The market potential is significant as up to 300 million individuals may be screened every other year which provides for an addressable market in the excess of 3.5 billion USD.



Additional information

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About Exiqon

Exiqon's products are based on the proprietary LNA™ technology. This technology offers unique advantages for detection of microRNA biomarkers for life science researchers, drug developers and cancer treating physicians working towards personalizing medicine. Exiqon operates in two business areas: Exiqon Life Sciences has established a position for itself as one of the market's leading providers of microRNA research products for microRNA analysis in cells. Our research products are used by academia, biotech and pharmaceutical companies around the world to make groundbreaking discoveries about the correlation between gene activity and the development of cancer and other diseases. Exiqon Life Sciences is also collaborating with pharmaceutical companies in their effort to develop new medicines based on microRNA as biological markers. Exiqon Diagnostics collaborates with pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies to develop novel molecular diagnostic tests for early detection of diseases which can help physicians make treatment decisions. Exiqon is listed on the NASDAQ OMX in Copenhagen. For more information about us, please visit www.exiqon.com.

