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EXIQON FORMS COLLABORATION WITH RIGSHOSPITALET

Exiqon today announces the start of a collaboration with Rigshospitalet on the development and verification of a molecular diagnostic test for the identification of cancer of unknown primary site.

Exiqon A/S today announces the start of a collaboration with Rigshospitalet, Onkologisk Klinik, The Finsen Center and Klinisk Biokemisk Afdeling at Rigshospitalet on the development and verification of a miRNA-based diagnostic test for cancer of unknown primary site. Cancer of unknown primary site is the description of a metastasis for which it is difficult to establish the origin of the cancer.

Cancer of unknown primary site is a problem in approximately 5% of all diagnosed cancers. When the primary site of a cancer is unknown it is difficult to administer the best possible treatment. The collaboration between Exiqon and Rigshospitalet will focus on the verification of data generated by Exiqon during its development of a molecular diagnostic product for identification of cancer of unknown primary site. Specifically, the collaboration focuses on identifying tissue specific miRNA signatures for the development of a diagnostic test that will enable the identification of tissue origin of primary tumors. Prognosis and therapeutic regimens are highly dependent on the origin of the cancer and identification of the origin of the primary tumor can improve patient care.

"This collaboration is an important step for Exiqon and forms a natural addition to the molecular diagnostic products we are developing for cancer treatment selection. Onkologisk Klinik at Rigshospitalet is the leading cancer center in Denmark for work within cancer of unknown primary site and through this collaboration we bring exceptional clinical expertise and Exiqon's strong gene expression technology together to develop a next generation molecular diagnostic test. Together with Rigshospitalet, we intend to analyse the miRNA profile of a large number of cancers in order to establish a classification database which, with a high degree of certainty, will enable us to determine the origin of a cancer tissue sample by comparing its profile with the classification database," says Søren Møller, V.P of Research and Development at Exiqon.

"For several years, treatment of cancer patients with unknown primary site in Denmark has been centralized at the Department of Oncology at Rigshospitalet. Our aim is to develop diagnostic tools that can help improve the prognosis for the large group of patients who are diagnosed with cancer of unknown primary by offering a relevant treatment without delay" says Associate professor DMSc, Gedske Daugaard at Onkologisk Klinik, The Finsen Center, Rigshospitalet. "We believe that miRNAs constitute a valuable group of new diagnostic markers that hold promise that real progress can be made in the treatment selection for this group of patients".

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About miRNA

microRNAs (miRNAs) are a novel class of regulatory RNA molecules with surprisingly widespread effects on gene regulation. Although recently identified as a class of molecules, initial studies indicate that miRNAs may regulate 30% or more of all genes in the genome, thus comprising an up till now hidden level of regulation. Interestingly, miRNAs have already been found to play important roles in several types of cancers and in processes involved in cellular differentiation. In the cells, miRNAs are found in form of single-stranded RNA molecules, which are typically 20-24 nucleotides long in their active form.

About Cancer of Unknown Primary

In most cases, a cancer will occur in specified tissue somewhere in the body (primary tumor), after which it may or may not spread to other tissue (secondary tumors or metastases). The diagnosis unknown primary tumor (CUP) covers those patients in whom a cancer tumor has been established (e.g. through a biopsy), but where the histology does not match the tissue where it was identified, and where thorough examinations cannot provide a background for locating the primary tumor. In 5% of cancer patients, primary origin of the tumor cannot be identified, despite the use of advanced immunohistochemical or radiological techniques. Cancer of unknown primary ranks among the 10 most common malignancies and constitutes a heterogeneous group of disseminated malignant disease with an unknown biology and dismal prognosis. CUP patients have a very poor prognosis with a median survival of 5-6 months, and diagnosis has become a high priority since both prognosis and therapeutic regimens are dependent on the origin of the primary tumor.

About Rigshospitalet

Rigshospitalet is a highly specialized hospital, which has tasks within patient treatment, research and development, and training. Rigshospitalet has national and regional responsibilities within all medical specialities apart from dermatology, occupational medicine and child psychiatry. Rigshospitalet is part of The Capital Region of Denmark - one of five administrative units in Denmark. The Region provides among others healthcare, mental care, regional development and research for 1.6 mio. people – approx. 30% of the population. Next to Rigshospitalet is the Panum Institute with the Medical Faculty of Copenhagen University. This secures close cooperation on research and development. Rigshospitalet has about 1,100 beds and there are more than 60,000 admissions and 400,000 outpatient visits every year. About 7,400 individuals are employed at the hospital – without counting personnel who are paid by foundations.

About Exiqon

Exiqon's corporate mission is to combine leading-edge scientific expertise in gene expression with our proprietary LNA™ technology. Exiqon's products, services and scientific staff enable life science researchers to make groundbreaking discoveries. Moreover, Exiqon is addressing the unmet need for a new approach to the diagnosis of cancer. Exiqon's products are based on patented technology (LNA™ or Locked Nucleic Acids) that facilitates very precise and sensitive analysis of nucleic acids. Exiqon aims to expand the existing product offering for research use as well as to develop new proprietary molecular diagnostic products. Exiqon, through a number of recent initiatives, has positioned itself as a significant player in applying miRNA as the key biomarker in cancer diagnostics.

About LNA™

LNAs are a class of nucleotide analogues that bind very strongly to RNA and DNA targets. By including LNAs in detection probes, it is possible to design very specific high-affinity detection assays for small RNA targets like miRNAs, which otherwise is not possible using standard DNA-based detection probes.

Disclaimer

Forward-looking statements: This announcement contains forward-looking statements regarding Exiqon's potential future development and financial performance and other statements which are not historical facts. Such statements are made on the basis of assumptions and expectations



which, to the best of Exiqon's knowledge, are reasonable and well-founded at this time, but which may prove to be erroneous. Exiqon's operations are characterized by the fact that its actual results may deviate significantly from that described herein as anticipated, believed, estimated or expected.

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