

HZI and Bayer Schering Pharma AG look for new anti-cancer agents Ascenion mediates cooperation between basic research and industry

March 20, 2007, Munich – The Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research in Braunschweig (HZI) and the pharmaceutical company Bayer Schering Pharma AG are to cooperate in identifying new substances that could be used for the treatment of cancer. The joint project is based on over 40 years' world-class know-how accumulated by HZI scientists concerning the soil-living myxobacteria and their metabolism.

The researchers have already isolated and partly characterised over hundred myxobaterially-produced substances. Their growth-inhibitory effects on cancer cells will now be investigated. This research will be conducted by HZI scientists using testing procedures developed by Bayer Schering Pharma AG. In a further project, the HZI will also investigate two substances provided by Bayer Schering Pharma AG. The HZI will receive a standard fee for its services.

This is the 45th contract that Ascenion has initiated and mediated between the HZI and industry since it first began to collaborate with the institute (then known as the German Research Center for Biotechnology, GBF) at the end of 2002. "The high level of interest from industry underlines the enormous potential of public research in Germany. In the search for new therapeutic agents, the contribution of industry is particularly vital. As mediators in this process, we are delighted when results from our research institutes contribute to medical progress", says Dr. Christian Stein, CEO of Ascenion GmbH.

Notable examples, such as the cancer drug Taxol, show that the systematic analysis of naturally-occurring substances can lead to highly successful pharmaceuticals. The therapeutic potential of myxobacterial metabolic products is generally accepted. One example is the growth inhibitor Disorazole, which was licensed in 2004 – also via Ascenion – from the HZI to the pharmaceutical company Zentaris. A further example is a class of substances with anti-tumour effects, known as epothilons, first isolated from myxobacteria by HZI scientists in 1987. Clinical trials of several epothilons are being conducted by a number of pharmaceutical companies.

Should a potential anti-cancer agent be identified as a result of the cooperation, Ascenion will assist the parties in negotiating a possible licensing agreement.

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Background information

Ascenion GmbH

Ascenion is a patent management agency focused on the life sciences. Ascenion supports and advises scientists and research institutions with regard to the protection and exploitation of their intellectual property (patents, know-how, materials), and initiates and mediates license agreements between research institutions and industry. Among Ascenion's particular strengths are start-up coaching and active investment management. Ascenion is a 100% subsidiary of the Life-Science Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Research and the exclusive commercialization partner of 13 research institutes in the Helmholtz and Leibniz Associations. Ascenion's headquarters are in Munich, with further offices in Berlin, Braunschweig, Hamburg Honnover and Neuherberg. Further information at www.ascenion.de