

Ascenion Takes an Equity Position in Certus Pharmaceuticals

November 13, 2008, Munich, Germany – Ascenion GmbH announces today that it is taking an equity position in Certus Pharmaceuticals. Certus is a product-driven biopharmaceutical company based in South San Francisco, CA, U.S.A. Certus has two anti-cancer product platforms with compounds under development that have strong potential to solve long-standing drug delivery problems and that may enable the treatment of liver and other cancers where no effective therapy exists.

The underlying platform technologies were developed by researchers at the Max-Delbrück-Center (MDC), Berlin, and exclusively licensed to Certus through Ascenion, the MDC's exclusive partner in IP asset management. In return for the license and start-up coaching, a certain portion of Certus' shares was transferred to Ascenion. Proceeds from a future sale of these shares will be paid to the Life-Science Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Research, which then distributes the funds to appropriate public research projects in Germany.

The MDC's platform technologies allow for improved delivery of well established anti-cancer drugs and their specific accumulation at the tumour site. As a result, cancer patients can be treated more effectively with fewer side effects. Based on unique, charge-neutral nanoparticles, the MDC approach has a number of advantages over other drug delivery technologies, in particular, outstanding stability of the formulated drug, above-average accumulation of the active agent in tumour tissues, ease of production and the opportunity for oral as well as intravenous applications. Two drug candidates have been derived from the technologies, so far: *EmboSphere*, a compound for the treatment of liver cancer, and *TaxoSphere*, a nanoparticle containing paclitaxel extending the therapeutic window of Taxol[®] by increasing the exposure time of the tumor more than 25 fold.

"The commercial potential is enormous. The Taxol[®] and Taxotere[®] market, for instance, used to generate sales in the range of a blockbuster product. An improved, orally available formulation should rapidly capture a significant portion thereof," Christian Stein, CEO of Ascenion, comments. "We have carefully explored different routes of commercialization and identified Certus as an ideal licensing partner for the MDC's IP. With outstanding expertise in drug delivery and a strong track record in the biopharmaceutical industry, the team is perfectly set to transition the results of MDC research into drug development."

Certus has already provided initial proof of concept for both drug candidates and has just initiated its first financing round.

"With promising data from a physician sponsored trial and relevant animal models, we are confident to attract a premier syndicate of life-science investors," says Peter Scherrer, CSO of Certus. "We expect to file an IND within just 12 months upon completion of the financing round and hope to further substantiate our data in clinical trials in due course. Our compounds would not only significantly improve the safety and efficacy of chemotherapy for a large group of cancer patients but also provide the first effective treatment option for patients suffering from liver cancer."

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About Ascenion GmbH

Ascenion GmbH is an IP asset management company focused on the life sciences. Ascenion advises and supports public 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. The company places particular emphasis on coaching company founders and on active equity management. Ascenion was founded in 2001 as a 100% subsidiary of the Life-Science Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Research and has since acquired 12 research institutes in the Helmholtz and Leibniz Associations and also the Hanover Medical School as exclusive partners. Ascenion currently markets around 600 technologies on behalf of these institutes, and closes an average of about 60 agreements between research and industry per year. The team has also coached numerous spin-offs through their foundation and early growth and Ascenion holds equity in 14 of these companies. Ascenion's headquarters are in Munich, with further offices in Berlin, Braunschweig, Hamburg, Hanover and Neuherberg. Further information at www.ascenion.de