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Roche Diagnostics announces agreement with St Vincent's Hospital Sydney for Growth-Differentiation Factor-15 (GDF-15/MIC-1) cardiac test

Roche Diagnostics and St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Limited today announced the signing of an exclusive license agreement which provides Roche with worldwide rights for patents related to the use of Growth-Differentiation Factor-15 (GDF-15) in the area of diagnosis or prognosis of cardiovascular diseases.

Growth-Differentiation Factor-15 (first named Macrophage Inhibitory Cytokine-1 (MIC-1), is a member of the Transforming Growth Factor- β (TGF- β) cytokine superfamily. GDF-15 is not expressed in the normal adult heart, but is prominently induced in response to cardiac injury, hypoxia or other oxidative stress conditions.

Samuel N. Breit and coworkers at St Vincent's Hospital have pioneered the work on the structure and functional effects of GDF-15. They succeeded in translating the basic research into clinical applications. Breit's group was the first to describe the association of serum GDF-15 levels with cardiovascular events and prognosis. Subsequent work has focused on the role of GDF-15 in pathologic hypertrophic growth of the myocardium as well as dilated cardiomyopathy and heart failure. These experiments led to the conclusion that GDF-15 is a novel antihypertrophic regulatory factor in the heart.

The work of Breit et al is complemented by findings of Kai C. Wollert et al from the Medical School of Hannover, who described the function of GDF-15 in cardiac reperfusion injury and, more importantly, the prognostic information in patients with acute coronary syndromes and suggested algorithms for intervention. Wollert's group was the first to describe that GDF-15 and natriuretic peptides BNP / NT-proBNP provide independent and clinically useful information in patients who have heart failure and other cardiovascular disease states. In January 2009, Roche and Hannover Medical School signed an agreement providing Roche with exclusive worldwide rights related to the use of GDF-15 in the area of cardiovascular diseases.

Both Breit's and Wollert's group have provided groundbreaking information to move GDF-15 from research to a clinically valuable diagnostic tool in cardiology. This is also reflected by an increasing number of

publications and reviews on GDF-15.

“Roche’s goal is to expand its leadership in cardiovascular diagnostics. We are committed to research and developing new cardiac diagnostic tests that provide valuable information about the disease and could help physicians to provide patients with optimal treatment” said Dirk Ehlers, Head of Roche Professional Diagnostics.

About St Vincent’s Hospital

St Vincent’s Hospital is Australia’s second oldest hospital. A major public hospital and a principal referral teaching hospital, St Vincent’s specialises in heart/lung transplantation, bone marrow transplantation, cardiology, cancer, HIV medicine, respiratory medicine, mental health, and drug and alcohol services. St Vincent’s operates a major Emergency Department service, providing trauma services for the Sydney CBD.

The Hospital has a long-standing reputation for treating high acuity and complex patient loads, attracting referrals on a state-wide and national basis.

One of the largest medical research hubs in Australia, the St Vincent’s Research Precinct houses the St Vincent’s Centre for Applied Medical Research, the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, Garvan Institute of Medical Research and the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research.

About Roche

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world’s leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As the world’s biggest biotech company and an innovator of products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, the Group contributes on a broad range of fronts to improving people’s health and quality of life. Roche is the world leader in in-vitro diagnostics and drugs for cancer and transplantation, and is a market leader in virology. It is also active in other major therapeutic areas such as autoimmune diseases, inflammatory and metabolic disorders and diseases of the central nervous system. In 2008 sales by the Pharmaceuticals Division totalled 36.0 billion Swiss francs, and the Diagnostics Division posted sales of 9.7 billion francs. Roche has R&D agreements and strategic alliances with numerous partners, including majority ownership interests in Genentech and Chugai, and invested nearly 9 billion Swiss francs in R&D in 2008. Worldwide, the Group employs about 80,000 people. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.roche.com.

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