

International & MA Cancer R&D Clusters Showcased at Whitehead Institute

Four Boston-area startups were among those showcased in an international program on collaborative cancer research & therapy clusters held today at the Whitehead Institute in Kendall Square, Cambridge.

All four of the Boston companies are developing methods and technologies that aim to better diagnose or cure cancer; all are hopeful; all are seeking funding, investors, or purchasers.

The program, called the International Cancer Cluster Showcase, was sponsored by Sanofi, which recently purchased Cambridge-based Genzyme Corporation, and by cancer research and treatment clusters in the Norway, the UK, France and in Massachusetts.

The program was held in conjunction with the International Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) Convention, to start tomorrow.

In introducing the Boston area companies, Abigail Barrow of the [Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center](#), who chaired the Boston and the overall sessions, pointed out that Cambridge is, perhaps, the paramount biotechnology and cancer research center in the US.

- [AcuityBio, Inc.](#) a Boston University Spinoff, is developing a biodegradable polymer mesh to be implanted during cancer surgery for later, sustained use in local administration of cancer drugs, according to John Schwartz, the AcuitBio CEO. The goal is to prevent cancer recurrences in specific soft tissues thus

improving the quality of patients' lives, reducing the cost of care, increasing the length of disease-free progression and significantly improving cure rates for early stage cancer patients, Schwartz said.

- Joel Beriac, PhD, the president & CEO of [Akrivis Technologies](#) said that his company is developing an ultrasensitive "Z-Tect," (TM) technology platform that promises to allow much earlier cancer detection and more effective personalized therapies than is currently possible. Z-tect will save numerous lives and reduce healthcare costs by lowering "several thousand fold" the current limit-of-detection of early cancer biomarkers, imaging much smaller cancer lesions. Akrivis plans to ultimately develop, beyond ultrasensitive diagnostics, safer and more efficacious targeted therapies.
- [BIOARRAY Therapeutics](#) is developing molecular diagnostics to improve cancer treatment decisions that are currently made on a trial-and-error basis, according to Marcia V. Fournier, PhD, the BIOARRAY founder and CEO. BIOARRAY's core technology identifies relevant cancer biomarkers based on the normal biology and micro-environment representing underlying biological processes involved in the progression of tumors— independent of any specific patient set, cancer subgroup or treatment, Fournier said. The company's lead diagnostic is a response prediction test for breast cancer—targeting the growing molecular diagnostics and personalized medicine markets.
- CanThera Therapeutics is a development stage oncology therapeutics company built on technology from the Mass General Hospital laboratories and the Broad Institute. According consultant [Peter Leone](#), the investigators have found that a natural substance, piperlongumine (PL) appears to kill cancer cells by jamming the machinery that dissipates high oxidative stress (ROS). Normal

cells have low levels of ROS and don't need high levels of the antioxidant enzymes that PL stimulates. CanThera aims to advance a selected novel analog of PL into the clinic in 2012.

The showcase also featured:

QUEBEC PRESENTERS:

- Angiochem: www.angiochem.com 

Q-CROC (Quebec – Clinical Research Organization in Cancer)
<http://qcroc.ca> 

OSLO PRESENTERS:

- Epitarget AS: www.epitarget.com 
- Lytix Biopharma: www.lytixbiopharma.com 
- Targovax AS: www.targovax.com 
- Vaccibody AS: www.vaccibody.com 

TOULOUSE/CANCER BIO SANTE CLUSTER PRESENTERS

- Carlina Technologies: www.carlinattech.com 
- Millegen: www.millegen.com
- Skuldtech: www.skuldtech.com 

UK PRESENTERS

- Senectus Therapeutics Limited:
www.senectustherapeutics.com 
- Acublate Limited

Poster Session Companies

Oncocat: www.oncocat.org/principal.php?idiom=eng

AB-therapeutics: www.ab-therapeutics.com

Oryzon: www.oryzon.com/es/inicio

—Anita M. Harris

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