

7 Global Companies Form Consortium to Fund Preclinical Neuroscience Research in Massachusetts

BOSTON – Wednesday, June 20, 2012 – Seven global biopharmaceutical companies have each pledged to contribute \$250,000 a new consortium that will fund preclinical neuroscience research in order to accelerate and make available academic research from Massachusetts to the pharmaceutical industry, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and consortium members announced today.

Companies participating in the Massachusetts Neuroscience Consortium include Abbott, Biogen Idec, EMD Serono, Janssen Research & Development, LLC, Merck, Pfizer and Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc.

“From Alzheimer’s disease, to Parkinson’s disease, to multiple sclerosis, neurological diseases affect millions of Americans and millions more across the globe,” Patrick said. “Through the research that this consortium will fund, we aim to bring those people, their families, and many others hope for a better future.”

The announcement took place in the Massachusetts Pavilion at the 2012 BIO International Convention.

According to a press release from the governor’s office: the Consortium is a pioneering new model designed to leverage Massachusetts’ rich environment for purposes of accelerating early-stage research available to the pharmaceutical industry, introducing academic researchers to the challenges of targeted research, and facilitating industry-academic collaborations.

A number of factors make the Massachusetts Neuroscience Consortium unique:

- Proposed projects will be short-term and results-oriented. Timelines, milestones, budgets and objectives will be clearly defined by the industry sponsors.
- Industry sponsors will identify common standards, e.g. levels of validation necessary for a project objective to be considered "complete."
- Industry sponsors will work in collaboration with principal investigators and their teams; sponsors also will contribute tools, data and other resources to the project teams to expedite their work.
- Results are shared with all participants; companies and academic researchers will have access to the use of any tools developed by each project; industry sponsors will determine their interest in validated targets as projects are completed.

"The Consortium is a pioneering new model that is designed to leverage the rich research environment in Massachusetts for purposes of accelerating pre-clinical research available to the biotech and pharmaceutical industry, introducing academic researchers to the challenges of targeted research, and facilitating industry-academic partnerships," said Susan-Windham Bannister, Ph.D., President and CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center. "I sincerely thank our seven charter members for stepping up to this challenge and joining in this new collaboration."

Each participating company has pledged to contribute \$250,000 to the Consortium, for total initial funding of \$1.75 million. Members of the Consortium will solicit and review proposals from academic research institutions for pre-clinical neuroscience research. The first solicitation is expected to open in the fall of 2012. All Massachusetts academic and research institutions will be eligible to apply for grant

funding through the Consortium. The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center will administer the Consortium, and will use its convening power to reduce barriers to collaboration and to expedite access to the research community.

Massachusetts is a center of excellence in the field of biomedical neuroscience with world leaders representing all major fields of neurobiology and neurology. The combination of basic neuroscience, translational and clinical research across more than a dozen world-renowned institutions represents what may be the world's highest density of neuroscience research. This provides a rich and fertile environment within which to advance the understanding and treatment of brain disorders.

"EMD Serono is proud to be a part of this new initiative to further neuroscience research within our company's home state of Massachusetts," said James Hoyes, President of EMD Serono. "This Consortium represents true collaboration amongst industry leaders, to foster breakthroughs in science today that will change the shape of medicine for tomorrow. We look forward to accelerating research and innovation in the area of neuroscience, and together, making a difference in the lives of patients."

"Janssen Research & Development is pleased to be a charter sponsor of this innovative approach to advance neuroscience research," said Hussein Manji, MD, Global Therapeutic Area Head, Neuroscience, Janssen R&D. "We believe scientific collaboration that brings together the best ideas and expertise from both academia and industry will play an important role in helping translate basic science discoveries into promising new treatments."

"We are delighted to be a founding member of the Neuroscience Consortium," said Douglas E. Williams, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, Research and Development at Biogen Idec. "New types of collaborations among academia and industry are increasingly important to stimulating the discovery of better therapies and

advancing science and medicine. At Biogen Idec, we are working on discovering and developing drugs across a number of areas in neurodegenerative disease and believe that this first-of-its-kind collaboration among the state, biopharmaceutical companies and top academic researchers is important for maintaining a vibrant and innovative research organization and making sure we deliver better therapies to patients with these difficult diseases.”

“Pfizer Neuroscience is in Cambridge, Massachusetts, largely due to the intense concentration of neuroscience thought leaders,” said Dr. Michael Ehlers, Chief Scientific Officer for Pfizer Neuroscience. “This collaboration is a step forward in our effort to address the urgent need for therapies in neurologic and psychiatric disease.”

“This is an exciting and promising new model for collaboration to advance the study of behavioral health and neuroscience disorders. Sunovion is proud to participate in this initiative,” said Richard Russell, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc. “The Life Sciences Center has played an essential role in convening this group and making this collaboration happen, and we thank them for their leadership.”

“The academic research community is committed to understanding these neurologic conditions at the most basic and fundamental molecular level, and most importantly, to translating that depth of understanding into clinical application,” said Jeffrey S. Flier, Dean of Harvard Medical School. “Basic discovery and translational science are essential to our success, and we in academia have the infrastructure to do it.”

“When I was first diagnosed with MS nearly 20 years ago, there were no approved treatments on the market,” said Joann D’Amico Stone of Waltham. “Since that time, there have been tremendous advancements made, opening up a number of options for patients – including my MS treatment from Biogen Idec. It’s heartening

to see these companies collaborating, because I think that it will ultimately help speed and increase the number of important treatments that can benefit patients like me.”

“In 2009 I became the fourth member of my extended family to be officially diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease,” said Allen Krieger of Lexington, a distinguished astrophysicist. “Alzheimer’s has changed my life in a number of ways – I have difficulty finding things, making decisions, and remembering things that used to be routine. I’ve participated in clinical trials and other research to do what I can to help. This consortium is a new and promising approach to advancing Alzheimer’s research through collaboration between the companies and academic institutions that are leading the way in the search for a cure.”

“We are in a race against time in our fight to find treatments and a cure for Alzheimer’s,” said James Wessler, President and CEO of the Alzheimer’s Association, MA/NH Chapter. “We applaud Governor Patrick and the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center for the foresight shown in the creation of this new neuroscience consortium. For the 120,000 people in Massachusetts with Alzheimer’s, this cannot come soon enough.”

The BIO International Convention provides Governor Patrick, Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray, state and industry leaders with an opportunity to showcase Massachusetts as a global leader in the life sciences industry, and the preeminent place for life sciences companies to invest in and expand.

Governor Patrick’s ten-year, \$1 billion life sciences investment package has strengthened the state’s global leadership in the life sciences. The initiative melds all of the state’s key resources in order to spur research, investment, innovation and commercialization. Now the life sciences industry in Massachusetts is thriving, with more than 52 percent job growth in the biopharma sector since 2001 and more than 80,000 employees working in the life sciences.

–*Anita M. Harris*

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