

Marketplace

Anti-HIV triumvirate?

Bristol-Myers Squibb (www.bms.com), Gilead Sciences (www.gilead.com), and Merck (www.merck.com) are considering the first multicompany effort to develop a once-daily, fixed-dose combination of three anti-HIV drugs. The proposed combination—aimed at simplifying treatment regimens, particularly in developing countries—would include Gilead’s Viread and Emtriva, and efavirenz, marketed by Bristol-Myers as Sustiva and by Merck as Stocrin.



Diseased genes technology.

In a study funded by Hoffmann-La Roche (www.rocheusa.com), ParAllele BioScience (www.parallelebio.com) has used its single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) discovery technology to identify both rare (to 1% frequency) and common SNPs in a large Type 2 diabetes population. Many of the disease-associated SNPs found result in changes to proteins known to be involved in the metabolism of sugar.

Site consolidation. To reduce costs and prepare for future growth, Schering-Plough (www.schering-plough.com) will develop its 88-acre site in Summit, NJ, to accommodate R&D needs and improve operational efficiencies. The company will consolidate operations from several other sites in the state.

Deals

Company launched. PowderMed has been created as an independent company through the spin-off of Chiron Vaccines’ powder-injection DNA vaccine technology. The Oxford, U.K.-based company will focus on the development of therapeutic DNA vaccines. The company has also expanded its partnership with GlaxoSmithKline (GSK, www.gsk.com), under which GSK will gain additional licenses to the powder-injection technology. PowderMed also will acquire two former GSK DNA vaccine programs based on this technology.

Genotyping partnership. Genetic solutions provider ParAllele BioScience and Affymetrix (www.affymetrix.com) have signed a nonexclusive marketing agreement under which they will offer early technology access to ParAllele’s MegAllele genotyping reagents for use with Affymetrix GeneChip arrays. The collaboration will let researchers perform large-scale genotyping using their own panels of single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs). The products also allow the flexibility for genotyping tens of thousands of SNPs in a single assay.

Sequencing grant. 454 Life Sciences (www.454.com), a subsidiary of CuraGen (www.curagen.com), has received a two-year,

\$2.4 million grant titled “Massively Parallel High-Throughput, Low-Cost Sequencing” from the National Human Genome Research Institute, a division of the NIH (www.nih.gov), to fund the scale-up of its picoliter sequencing technology. The grant will help advance 454’s technology toward the sequencing of larger genomes, such as those of fungi, and the goal of developing systems to routinely measure and cost-effectively sequence an individual’s personal human genome. For example, the company hopes to further reduce the size of subnanoliter wells to achieve at least 2 million on a 2.5-square-inch plate.



Instrument maker acquired. Ampersand Ventures (www.ampersandventures.com) has acquired ESA, Inc. (www.esainc.com), a global supplier of analytical instruments and kits for the clinical diagnostic, biomedical research, and drug discovery markets. “We are very excited about working with Ampersand to build on our past success and significantly expand our market presence,” says ESA president and board of directors member Walter DiGiusto. Ampersand sees ESA as “a solid platform for building a leading life science tools company through a combination of internal growth and acquisitions.”

People

Science pioneer dies.

Legendary inventor and industrialist Arnold Orville Beckman, founder and chairman emeritus of Beckman Instruments (now Beckman Coulter; www.beckman-coulter.com), died at age 104 on May 18 in La Jolla, CA. Through the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, the philanthropist contributed more than \$400 million in support of scientific education and research. He was also awarded several honors for his accomplishments that rev-



olutionized science, including the National Medal of Technology by President Reagan in 1988 and the National Medal of Science by President Bush in 1989. Most recently, he was awarded the 2004 Lifetime Achievement

Award from the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

Luminex CEO named.

Luminex (www.luminex-corp.com), a manufacturer of biological testing devices, has appointed Patrick Balthrop as CEO and president. Balthrop joins Luminex from Fisher Scientific International, where

he served as president of Fisher HealthCare. Prior to Fisher, he held a number of leadership positions at Abbott Laboratories.

Director appointed.

Vernalis (www.vernalis.com), a U.K.-based biotechnology company, has appointed Allan Baxter as a nonexecutive director. Baxter is the senior vice president of drug discovery and development at GlaxoSmithKline, where he oversees GSK’s worldwide drug discovery efforts including clinical development of new product candidates. ■