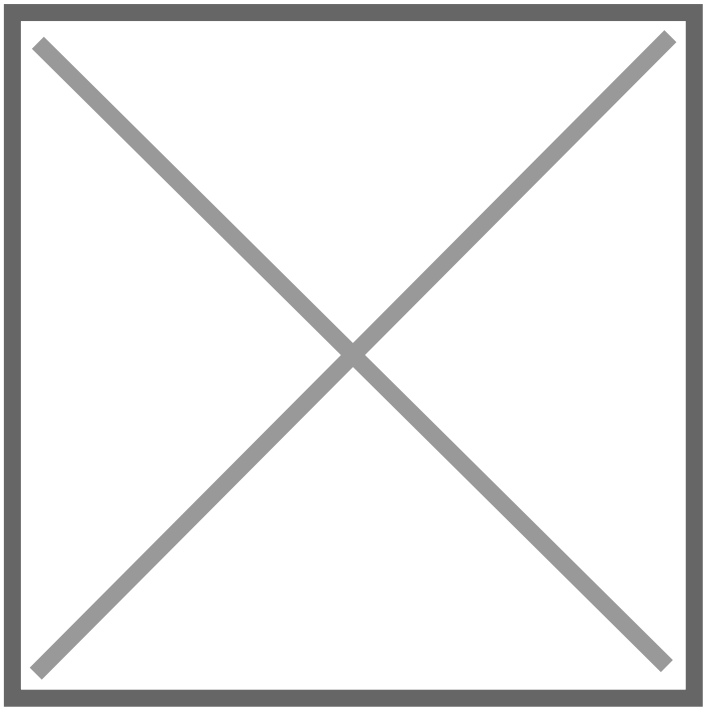


Bio News

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Genzyme, ICGEB to focus on neglected diseases

Genzyme, a global leader in biotechnology, and the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), a not-for-profit research and development organization, have announced a new research collaboration to advance treatments for neglected diseases. The collaboration between Genzyme and ICGEB will initially focus on the development of new, improved treatments for malaria, a debilitating infectious disease of developing countries.

ICGEB and Genzyme scientists are currently targeting Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax, increasingly resistant parasites that cause up to 65 percent of malaria in India. ICGEB has already begun to identify promising targets that, with the drug development expertise of Genzyme, could lead to drug compounds effective against malaria. The research will take place both in ICGEB's laboratories in New Delhi, India and in Genzyme's facilities in Waltham, Mass., USA.

Under the agreement, scientists from Genzyme and ICGEB are expected to work in each other's laboratories from time to time. The collaboration includes an innovative approach to intellectual property rights, providing ICGEB rights to commercial uses within the field of neglected disease on a royalty-free basis.

Welcoming the new initiative, Dr M K Bhan, secretary of the Department of Biotechnology of the Indian Ministry of Science and Technology, said, "This is an innovative new model for translational research through public-private partnerships. My best wishes to ICGEB and Genzyme for a fruitful and successful collaboration."

Henri A. Termeer, chairman and chief executive officer of Genzyme Corporation said, "The ICGEB is unlocking new approaches to prevent malaria, and Genzyme is ready to build on their momentum and move these promising targets through the drug discovery process, ultimately bringing critical treatments to people at risk in the developing world. We look forward to building a productive, sustainable partnership with ICGEB."

Virander Chauhan, director of ICGEB, New Delhi, said, "We are excited about this new collaboration. Combining ICGEB's domain knowledge in malaria with Genzyme's expertise in drug development opens up new possibilities for the development of novel strategies to combat malaria."

Both organizations bring strong capabilities in biotechnology research and drug development. The ICGEB is a premier global research organization, with the mandate to use biotechnology to find solutions to problems of the developing world. Funded in part by the Department of Biotechnology of the Indian Ministry of Science and Technology and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it conducts innovative research in life sciences and strengthens the research capabilities of its 57 member countries through training, funding programs and advisory services.

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ICON opens full service central laboratory in India

ICON Central Laboratories, a division of ICON PLC, a global provider of outsourced development services to the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device industries, has announced the opening of a full service central laboratory in Bangalore.

The purpose-built, 14,000 sq ft facility expands ICON Central Laboratories' existing network of laboratories located in Farmingdale, New York; Dublin, Ireland and Singapore. The new laboratory is in the process of receiving CAP (College of American Pathologists) and NABL (National Accreditation Board for Laboratory Testing) accreditation.

"India has become a key region for global clinical trials, which has greatly boosted the demand for local laboratory testing within a global laboratory network," commented Bob Scott-Edwards, president, ICON Central Laboratories.

The company has also appointed Dr Anuradha Rajput as general manager, ICON Central Laboratories India. Prior to joining ICON, for eight years Dr Anuradha Rajput worked as the general manager and laboratory director with Clinigene International.

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OSE launches India operations

Oncology Services Europe (OSE), a full service CRO, specialized in clinical drug development in Oncology launched its India operations with the establishment of independent clinical services company Oncology Services India (OSI) in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. OSI will offer a complete clinical service range from Phase I (first in human) to Phase IV (PMS) trials.

With commencement of Indian operations, the basis of a new international "Oncology Specialist" within the global CRO business has been established. The new entity in India combines the best of clinical research capabilities of Europe and India.

Announcing the initiative, chief executive officer of Oncology Services India (OSI), Dr Vimal Sanghavi, said, "Oncology Services is looking to replicate the success of its European experience of multi-centric global trials in Indian subcontinent. Clinical trials have grown increasingly global, larger and more complex. Government regulations are progressively more stringent, requiring more studies with larger patient populations especially in Oncology. India is a favorable destination for conducting multinational clinical trials in the oncology segment.

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Span Diagnostics, Nihon Kohden open manufacturing facility

Span Diagnostics Ltd (SDL) a leading player in diagnostics has joined with Nihon Kohden, a Japanese medical electronics giant to distribute its hematology analyzers in India few years ago. Span is a pioneer of high quality products for pathology and clinical laboratories in India. In the beginning of this year, Span and Nihon Kohden have announced a joint venture company to manufacture reagents for the hematology analyzer named as "Span Nihon Kohden Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd" (SNKDPL) on October 9.

Dr P K Desai, chairman of SDL, Veeral Desai, managing director of SDL and Kazuo Ogino, chairman of Nihon Kohden Corporation and Kunio Shino Akiz, director of Nihon Kohden Corporation have inaugurated the manufacturing facility at Sachin, Surat.

When functioning at its full capacity, this plant will ensure consistent supply of quality reagents in India to reinforce Span's commitments to quality diagnosis.

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Advinus Therapeutics begins US operations

Advinus Therapeutics, a Tata group, contract research services and pharmaceutical drug discovery company, based in Bangalore, has announced that it has started its US operations by incorporating a wholly owned subsidiary, Advinus Therapeutics Inc. The US Company will be operating out of its office in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. In addition, the company also announced that it has appointed Dr Eric Nelson as its global head of business development, marketing and strategy.

Dr Nelson with over 20 years of corporate and business development experience with both large pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies would be based out of the company's US office and will have the responsibility of managing its operations.

Commenting on the US operations, Dr Rashmi Barbhaiya, the CEO and managing director of the company said, "Advinus has a very large and growing client base in the US. In addition we now have multiple drug discovery alliances and collaborations with both large pharma and biotechs based out of the US. One of the main reasons to start the US operations of our company is to build on these relationships and to expand into new ones."

Rajiv Malik, the senior VP and head of business operations at Advinus added, "Having Eric as our head of business development in the US would help bridge the distance that most US companies feel when working with R&D companies in this part of the world. Now a US based company does not have to wait till the end of business day for them to be able to talk to us."

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Tata Chemicals signs a binding agreement with JOil

Tata C hemicals' wholly owned subsidiary, Tata Chemicals Asia Pacific Pvt Ltd, has entered into definitive agreements to invest S$25 million in JOil (Singapore) Pvt Ltd. JOil, a Jatropha seedling company based in Singapore, has been set up by the Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory Ltd (TLL), along with other investors in Singapore.

Speaking on this development, Homi Khusrokhan, managing director, Tata Chemicals, said, "Jatropha has been identified as an ideal starting material for bio-diesel production for countries like India, because it can be grown on wasteland. However, the non-availability of good quality planting material has resulted in highly variable yields from the cultivation carried out so far. Through this joint venture we would like to access some of the excellent work done by Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory on this plant and make the superior varieties of Jatropha available to those interested in its cultivation. It also holds great promise for our own bio-fuels programme."

By virtue of this agreement, Tata Chemicals will get exclusive marketing rights for JOil's Jatropha seedlings in India and East Africa and a preferential price for seedlings it requires for its own cultivation of Jatropha.

JOil will set up tissue culture labs in various locations, and market Jatropha seedlings produced by using the micro-propagation technology developed by TLL. TLL has done a considerable amount of original work on developing superior elite varieties of Jatropha, which becomes productive sooner than other known varieties and gives improved and more consistent yields.

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Bill Gates lauds India's polio eradication drive

Software tycoon, Bill Gates has expressed confidence that polio can be successfully eradicated with India leading the way. He also urged health officials to consider adding new tools to strengthen the existing polio eradication program.

Prior to addressing the media in New Delhi, Bill Gates observed surveillance, vaccination, and outbreak response activities in Delhi, visited the family of a young girl who was recently diagnosed with polio, and met with Indian health officials and polio experts.

"Being successful in polio is of incredible importance to public health so it is important we do everything possible to accelerate eradication. India has made an impressive commitment and I applaud the consideration of innovative approaches including the addition of IPV campaigns and the use of a bivalent vaccine," said Bill Gates.

Global eradication efforts have reduced annual cases of polio worldwide by more than 99 percent. India is one of only four countries in the world where polio is still endemic. Bill Gates said that there are many reasons for optimism that India can prevail against polio and that the country is pivotal to showing that eradication is possible.

Bill Gates commended the extraordinary work of the government and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which includes Rotary International, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control. He also expressed his gratitude to Indian parents and volunteers for their continued participation in immunization campaigns to protect children from polio.

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Cabinet nod for UNESCO's biotech institution

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the establishment of the UNESCO Regional Centre for Training and Education in Biotechnology at Faridabad, Haryana as a Category-II Institution of UNESCO with the revised budget of Rs 99.55 crore.

The centre would act as the focal point for cooperation amongst the members' countries of the Asian region in Biotechnology. The centre would be a regional hub for interdisciplinary education and training in biotechnology with emphasis on novel education program relevant to industry, including bio-drug discovery science, nano-science & medicine, imaging techniques, designer crops, bioengineering and biomaterials, intellectual property, technology transfer and regulation to fulfill and overcome the acute shortage of skilled human resources in India.

A Board of Governors will govern the Centre with representations from India, UNESCO and the member countries. Collaboration with UNESCO will ensure gateways to international institutions such as European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and International Union of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology (IUBMB) and usher in skill acquisition in the global context.

The Centre will be the first ever inter-disciplinary institution in life sciences and biotechnology in India with unique international character to offer novel educational and training courses in the interdisciplinary and related areas of biotechnology. It would also be a place for designing new programs for education and training, which could be then assimilated by the existing universities in India and the region.

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Veeda Oncology announces $10.2 million worth new business

Veeda Oncology, a full service global Oncology CRO with facilities in North America, Europe and India, has been awarded $10.2 million of new clinical research programs last month from five new clients.

The awarded work includes services for site management, project management, data management, pharmacovigilance, medical oversight, biostatistical support and monitoring services. The awarded work will be conducted in North America, Europe and India.

Matt Bowman, president and CEO of Veeda Oncology, said, "This continued growth is a reflection of the need within oncology clinical development for oncology expertise, cost effective programs and access to oncology patients".

Veeda Oncology is a global oncology CRO with operations in India, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the US. The company is a full service oncology CRO for Phase I through Phase IV studies with the unique capability of providing rapid and strong global patient accrual with an effective cost structure.

ICRISAT creates impact in Africa

Farmers in eastern and southern Africa (ESA) were growing pigeonpea that gave low yields, took very long to mature, were susceptible to wilt and often suffered from terminal drought stress. But this situation was reversed when scientists from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) adapted pigeonpea in ESA, screened for resistance to wilt and incorporated bold white grain preferred by farmers and markets in the medium- and long-duration varieties.

After evaluation, a large number of these varieties were released in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. In eastern Kenya, over 10,000 hectares of medium-duration varieties resistant to wilt and cropped two times a year are being grown by farmers. Likewise, in northern Tanzania, two long-duration varieties, which are high yielding, having white bold grain and resistant to wilt are being grown in over 50,000 hectares. In Malawi two long-duration varieties have been released and pigeonpea seed is now included in the country's subsidy program.

Working with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), ICRISAT introduced a range of large-seeded varieties from its germplasm collection and the breeding program at its global headquarters in Patancheru, India. The outcome was that Ethiopia became a chickpea exporting country and its farmers benefited from an improved income. Following the Ethiopian success, the production of chickpea has now spread to Mozambique and Malawi in southern Africa and to Tanzania and Kenya in eastern Africa.

Nandan inks deal with ICRISAT for NUTRIPLUS

Nandan Biomatrix and ICRISAT have signed the agreement for NUTRIPLUS project - a centre for excellence of food process, testing, R&D and production activities for the growth of nutraceuticals industry. The facilities provided under this project are

knowledge gateway, discovery gateway, innovative gateway & business gateway.

NutriPlus is seeking to support the nutraceutical industry with its research and interface with core members from various institutions and sectors participating, like, Ministry of Food Processing GOI, Wagenigen university et al. It's a centre for excellence of food process, testing, R&D and production activities for the up-liftment of nutraceutical industry.

Nestle suspends diabetes food deal with Avesthagen

Nestle Nutrition, the health food and nutrition arm of Nestle SA, has returned seven of eight nutritional bioactive molecules developed in a collaborative agreement with Indian biotechnology company Avesthagen Ltd., according to a report in "The Mint", citing a Nestle official.

The move effectively suspends a plan to use these active ingredients for a much talked about diabetes health food that the Swiss company is proposing to launch in the global market, the report said. "Nestle terminated the agreement with Avesthagen earlier this year," the report cited an email from Hilary Green, head of R&D communications, Nestle SA, as saying.

"Nestle has returned some of the compounds to us, and we are free to further develop them on our own or with other partners," the report quoted Avesthagen founder and chairperson Villoo Morawala Patell, as saying.

'Nanobiotechnology- The Big World of Small Things'

In a bid to create awareness about the scope and future of nanobiotechnology, the department of Microbiology, Royal College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Thane, Mumbai is organizing a one day National Level Seminar on 'Nanobiotechnology- The Big World of Small Things', to be held on January 10, 2009.

The seminar is being organized for the benefit of graduate, post-graduate and research students and the teachers in the field of Biological sciences. Experts of this field from IIT (Mumbai and Delhi); NCL, Pune and Monad Nanotech, Mumbai, would be enlightening the participants on different aspects of Nanobiotechnology.

Nanotechnology deals with the production of nanoscale particles/devices, which have tremendous potential in various fields. Knowledge of this subject is the need of the hour.

Ecron AcuNova makes strategic European appointment

Ecron AcuNova, has appointed Dr Antal K Hajos as its executive vice president of strategic operations for the European region.

Speaking on the appointment, Dr Klaus Wiedey, president and CEO, Ecron AcuNova said, "This appointment underlines Ecron AcuNova's commitment to the European and Indian market, where the company is rapidly expanding its client base, operations and expertise."

UK Government, Clinton Foundation to help Indian pharma companies

The UK Secretary of State for International Development, Douglas Alexander MP has announced that the UK is working with the Clinton Foundation to help Indian pharmaceutical companies produce cheaper drugs for malaria and AIDS in India and Africa. The proposed program will provide technical support to Indian companies in producing and registering new treatments for AIDS and malaria, and negotiate affordable prices for these drugs. This will help over 11 million people with AIDS gain access to life saving treatment by 2012.

"It's a genuine win-win situation. With Department for International Development (DFID) support to the Clinton Foundation, health services for malaria and AIDS in India and Africa will be able to buy drugs at cheaper prices and put more people on better quality treatment, and pharmaceuticals companies will enjoy a bigger market," pointed out Douglas Alexander.

Jubilant augments Clinsys Clinical Research

Jubilant Organosys has announced that its subsidiary Clinsys Clinical Research, Inc., a global contract research organization (CRO), has acquired TrialStat ClinicalAnalytics (TrialStat CA), a web-based electronic data capture (EDC) solution currently used by a wide range of pharmaceutical and CRO customers worldwide.

TrialStat CA is the industry's first EDC platform to allow all aspects of a study to be configured, deployed and managed through a browser interface, enabling customers to start their studies quickly and cost-effectively. The extensive global resources of Clinsys will enable TrialStat to continue its proven record of growth, customer service and product innovation.

This agreement will give TrialStat's existing CRO and biopharmaceutical customer base a broader scope of services.

Novo Nordisk to spread awareness on diabetes in children

Diabetes is a silent killer with India being the 'Diabetic Capital' of the World. Globally, every 10 seconds, a person dies of a diabetes-related illness and it is the fourth leading cause of death by disease. Every 10 seconds, a child suffering from diabetes also suffers the fate of this silent killer. People in India take the cause of diabetes lightly especially in contrast with children, despite statistics showing that six out of 10 children with diabetes do not manage their diabetes successfully in school (according to their physicians). Nine out of 10 cannot rely on a school nurse to assist them with their diabetes during school.

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) had declared 2007 the 'Year of the Child with Diabetes' and the United Nations has declared 2008 as the 'Year of diabetes among children and adolescents'. Diabetes is growing in prevalence and there is an urgent need to address this issue and the widespread lack of control of the disease in patients that have been diagnosed. As a result, Novo Nordisk initiated the DAWN Youth programme to explore the attitudes, wishes and needs of young people with or at risk of diabetes and their families.

Novo Nordisk has taken this step to spread awareness among parents and school management to let them know how they can be of help to their children without destroying their life at such an early stage. Through DAWN Youth, Novo Nordisk tries to share the appropriate measures that can be taken in schools by making basic things available like school nurses or school staff to answer to the needs of children with diabetes in a school environment.

Sysmex & Transasia launch Sysmex Network Communication System

Sysmex, the world leader in haematology, in partnership with Transasia Bio-Medicals launched the Sysmex Network Communication System (SNCS), the next Generation Support Service for its diagnostic instruments.

SNCS, an Internet based online customer service monitors the instruments 24X7. It provides online QC in order to continuously monitor the instruments condition on wide parameter range. The web information provides scientific and technical support information to users enabling them to maintain total quality on Sysmex haematology analyzers.

SNCS, is an ideal & necessary tool for customers who are already accredited, or going in for accreditation, clinical research organizations and customers with high workload of more than 70 to 100 samples / day and above all for all those customers who seek nothing but the best and are highly Quality Conscious.