

Merck Announces Completion of Tender Offer of Inspire Pharmaceuticals; Inspire CEO Steps Down

Merck & Co., Inc. (Whitehouse Station, NJ), announced that it has successfully completed its \$430 million acquisition of Inspire Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (Raleigh, NC). The cash tender offer for all outstanding shares (75.4%) of common stock of Inspire was completed by Monarch Transaction Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of Merck.

The deal, announced in February 2011, allows Merck to expand its ophthalmic business in the United States and acquire AzaSite (azithromycin ophthalmic solution 1%), a treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis. AzaSite's revenues increased 22% to \$42.7 million in 2010, according to Inspire.

Following the completion of the deal, it was reported that Inspire's President and CEO Adrian Adams, along with a number of senior executives, would be leaving the

company.¹ Mr. Adams joined Inspire in 2010 after serving as CEO of Sepracor Inc. (now Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc., Marlborough, MA) and, prior to that, Kos Pharmaceuticals (Cranbury, NJ), which was later acquired by Abbott Laboratories Inc. (Abbott Park, IL).

Merck also confirmed that it would be closing Inspire's administrative headquarters in Raleigh this year. Merck spokesman Ian McConnell told *Glaucoma Today* that the company plans to keep Inspire's sales team, as Merck tries to re-establish its US presence in ophthalmology with the progression of proposed glaucoma treatment Saflutan (tafluprost), which is under review by the FDA.

1. Chen M. Inspire to lose CEO, workers following Merck buyout. *Triangle Business Journal*. May 16, 2011. <http://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2011/05/16/inspire-to-lose-ceo-adams.html>. Accessed May 17, 2011.

Wills Eye Institute and Thomas Jefferson University Establish the Wills Vision Research Center at Jefferson

Wills Eye Institute and Thomas Jefferson University, both in Philadelphia, announced the creation of the Wills Vision Research Center at Jefferson. The new facility will foster regional, national, and global collaborations among a diverse group of clinicians and researchers working to better diagnose, treat, and prevent visual diseases, according to a new release.

The center will be directed by Julia A. Haller, MD, ophthalmologist-in-chief at Wills Eye Institute and Sue Menko, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University.

Research projects already in development reportedly include work to understand the genetics of congenital abnormalities; prevent neurodegenerative diseases such as age-related macular degeneration and determine the impact of Parkinson disease on the visual system; develop new treatments for cancers of the visual system such as

retinoblastoma and uveal melanoma; assess the connection between low vision and depression, especially in the elderly; and study the effects of diabetes on diabetic retinopathy.

Allergan Receives Mixed Ruling in Bid to Block Alphagan P Copies

Allergan, Inc. (Irvine, CA), received a mixed ruling from a US appeals court in the company's effort to prevent Apotex Inc. (Toronto, Ontario, Canada) and Exela PharmSci Inc. (Lenoir, NC) from selling a generic version of Allergan's glaucoma treatment Alphagan P, according to a news release.

The news release further stated that Apotex is not permitted to market its version of the eye drops until 2022 after failing to persuade the court to invalidate four of five patents held by Allergan. Exela won a ruling that its generic drug would not infringe the lone patent that was asserted against it, according to the US Court of Appeals opinion for the Federal Circuit in Washington.

It was reported that Alphagan P, along with Alphagan

and Combigan (Allergan Inc.), generated \$100.2 million in sales in the first quarter for Allergan. Apotex had conceded it infringed the patents, so the matter on appeal was whether the patents were properly issued, according to a news release. The court said one patent was an obvious variation on earlier research. Regarding the other four, the Federal Circuit rejected Apotex's arguments that the patented inventions covered a combination of Alphagan with Allergan's Refresh Tears product.

Glaucoma Technology Licensed by New Jersey Institute of Technology and University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey

New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) have executed a licensing agreement with The Incubation Factory (St. Louis, MO) covering NJIT's and UMDNJ's tonometry technology, on which a patent is pending. The tonometer was developed by a research team led by Gordon Thomas, PhD, a professor of physics and biomedical engineering at NJIT, and Robert Fechtner, MD, director of the glaucoma division at UMDNJ.

The tonometer is designed to allow for testing through the closed eyelid. Measurements could therefore be performed outside a normal medical setting, such as in a pharmacy-operated patient-care clinic or at home, according to a news release. The device would reportedly allow a glaucoma patient to check his or her own IOP and share the reading with the ophthalmologist in real time via the Internet.

Bioptigen Releases Envisu R4300 SD-OCT Deep Imaging at ARVO

Bioptigen Inc. (Research Triangle Park, NC) introduced the Envisu R4300, the deepest spectral domain optical coherence tomography imaging system for preclinical applications, according to a company news release. The Envisu R4300 is reportedly the first fourier-domain optical coherence tomography system with extended depth-imaging capability in the 800-nm wavelength band. With an imaging depth of 8 mm and better than 5- μ m axial

resolution, the Envisu R4300 is designed for imaging deep eye structures for preclinical ophthalmic research and development. Its convertible objective lens system reportedly provides extended-depth and high-resolution retinal imaging for visualization of outer retinal structures, the choroid, and deep structures of the optic nerve head.

For more information, visit bioptigen.com. □

Correction

In Glaucoma Today's early spring 2011 issue, a sentence in the article "Reducing the Preservative Load in Glaucoma Therapy" on page 65 should have read, "Preservative-free pilocarpine and Cosopt (fixed-combination timolol 2%-dorzolamide 0.5%; Merck & Co., Inc., Whitehouse Station, NJ) are available outside the United States."

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