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Isogenic Cell Models for Cancer Research Now Licensed Exclusively to Horizon Discovery in UK

Case Western Reserve University genetics professor's work seen as providing a vital tool for finding more effective treatments

CLEVELAND – With the goal of developing new, more effective and personalized cancer treatments, Horizon Discovery, based in Cambridge, England, has secured from Case Western Reserve University exclusive rights to a panel of new human isogenic cell models developed by the laboratory of Zhenghe John Wang, assistant professor of genetics at the university's School of Medicine.

The license is initially for 10 years and includes up-front fees and an ongoing royalty on product sales. The genetically engineered cell lines are based on a new technology invented by Wang and his associates two years ago.

Human isogenic cell models – known as cell lines and sometimes referred to as “patients-in-a-test-tube” – accurately mimic disease-causing mutations, enabling researchers to better understand how cancer manifests itself in patients and to identify the effect of drug therapies and various outcomes.

“These cell lines provide unique tools for drug discovery, because they are cells that best represent human cancers. Further research based on these cells may lead to development of new cancer therapies,” Wang said.

The lines will be added to Horizon Discovery's rapidly expanding library of X-MAN™ (gene X- Mutant And Normal) cell models, which are used to successfully predict which patient groups will respond to currently available and future drug treatments. Research involving Horizon Discovery's proprietary rAAV GENESIS gene-editing platform seeks to enhance drug development, leading to personalized cancer therapies.

Chris Torrance, Horizon Discovery's co-founder and chief scientific officer, said that the cell lines will help researchers decipher how disease-associated genes work and “will open up new routes to develop novel targeted therapies.”

“In partnering with Horizon, we gain a tremendous opportunity to bring these unique cancer cell lines to the market,” said Stacy Fening, licensing associate for life sciences in Case Western Reserve’s Technology Transfer Office. “Commercial deployment of these cell lines allows them to be used to their full potential to advance academic and pharmaceutical research in the cancer field.”

Horizon Discovery Executive Chairman Darrin M. Disley said he is delighted that the company is now able to provide a commercial outlet for the research at Case Western Reserve’s School of Medicine.

Disley said the freshly licensed panel of cell lines “will enable our customers to better understand the endogenous proteins that are activated/expressed when a human cell picks up the mutations implicated in the onset and progression of human cancers.”

Founded in 2007, Horizon Discovery builds on gene-engineering, cancer research and translational medicine, and it draws on intellectual property and know-how from major research universities.

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