



## **ZenBio, Inc. Awarded a Phase I SBIR Grant for the Development of an Islet Drug Discovery Platform**

**RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC** - ZenBio, Inc. announced that it has been awarded a Phase I SBIR grant to further expand its in-house capabilities for contract research through its human islet program. The award from the National Institutes of Health will fund the development of a high throughput drug discovery platform using human islets and islet-derived cells, including models that mimic disease states.

Obesity and Type 2 diabetes affect the lives of millions of people worldwide. Although there has been significant progress in defining the contributing factors and molecular mechanisms underlying both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, there remains an overwhelming demand for identification of new and effective therapies. In an effort to meet this demand ZenBio launched their human islet program providing glucose stimulated insulin secretion assays using human islets. These assays allow researchers to screen compounds for their ability to promote insulin secretion. However, the ability to adapt these assays to a high throughput format has proven challenging due to the lack of high quality human islets for research purposes and inherent donor-to-donor variability with respect to sensitivities to glucose and heterogeneity in the purity and size of the isolated islets. "Funding from this Phase I SBIR will allow ZenBio to utilize novel approaches to adapt our existing platform to a more robust and reproducible high throughput format" said Dr. Sarah Compton a Senior Scientist at ZenBio and the Principal Investigator of the program. "This will increase our screening capacity from a few hundred to potentially a few thousand compounds using a single islet donor. Together with the development of models using islets in environments that reflect disease states, such as chronic high glucose and elevated lipids observed in patients with diabetes, we aim to provide a unique set of drug discovery tools not currently available to the research community."

### **About ZenBio, Inc.**

**ZenBio, Inc.**, a privately held biotechnology company, is a leading provider of research tools for the study of human metabolic disease. Founded in 1995, the company performs contract research for major pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies around the world. ZenBio pioneered tissue engineering with adult adipose-derived stem cells and is currently investigating the role obesity plays in the development and onset of metabolic disease. Its mission is to provide the highest quality cells, reagents and contract services to the biomedical research community; to develop and commercialize research tools; and to leverage its expertise in this field as a contract research organization.

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