



September 6, 2011

**ZenBio, Inc. Awarded a Phase I SBIR Grant  
to Develop Drug Screening Platform with Human Skeletal Muscle Stem Cells**

**RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC** - ZenBio, Inc. announced that it has been awarded a Phase I SBIR grant to develop assays using human skeletal muscle stem cells. This human cell-based system will provide a method for determining causes of the poor muscle regeneration seen in various states such as seen in the elderly, and facilitate the identification of new drugs that can reverse the age and disease-related decline in muscle mass and function.

Skeletal muscle wasting is a serious condition prevalent in the aging population (sarcopenia) and in a variety of specific diseases. This condition results in loss of muscle function through impaired muscle regeneration, resulting in an increase in falls and injuries, a loss of independence, and a reduced quality of life. Muscle regeneration is controlled by the satellite cell, an adult muscle stem cell. When muscle is injured, the satellite cell becomes activated to proliferate and subsequently differentiate to a mature muscle cell. Bentley Cheatham, Ph.D. (ZenBio's vice-president of R&D) stated, "This is a new endeavor for ZenBio and builds on our strengths in metabolic disease. Our studies will provide additional insight into the age-dependent mechanisms that reduce satellite cell growth, as well as establish a human cell-based system that can be applied to a high throughput drug discovery program." The goals of this Phase I SBIR are to establish a human satellite cell-based system that can be used to study the regenerative process of skeletal muscle cells, and importantly, accelerate drug screening efforts to identify compounds that can regulate regeneration of skeletal muscle. The screening assay will become part of ZenBio's contract assay service when it is refined by work in Phase II, allowing pharmaceutical, biotech and academic institutions to profile the actions of compounds and biological agents on human satellite cells. Phase II efforts will also help ZenBio develop an intellectual property portfolio that covers chemical and target-driven information on muscle regeneration.

**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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