



July 1, 2010

Status: Biotechnology Business News For Immediate Release

ZenBio, Inc. Awarded Phase I SBIR Grant to Develop Adipose Stem Cells into Insulin Producing Cells

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC - ZenBio, Inc. announced that it has been awarded a Phase I SBIR grant to identify and characterize an adult stem cell population from human fat stroma that has the therapeutic potential to differentiate into insulin-secreting “beta-like” cells.

Human adult stem cells derived from adipose tissue are a practical source of stem cells from which to launch work on deriving beta-like cells for autologous transplantation. The medical need for new therapies to manage type 1 and type 2 diabetes is well known and appreciated by physicians and patients alike. A plentiful and convenient source of cells that release appropriate amounts of insulin in response to changes in glucose would be a major advancement for diabetes therapy, particularly if the cells were provided by the patient (i.e. autologous transplantation). “In type 1 and long-term type 2 diabetes, the failure of the beta cells in the pancreas to produce sufficient insulin results in eventual insulin dependence for survival.” said Dr. Renee Lea-Currie, ZenBio’s Director of Cell Biology and the Principal Investigator of the program. “If successful, this work would offer the possibility not only for cell treatment of type 1 and type 2 diabetic subjects but also the establishment of a human model for glucose-mediated insulin secretion.”

The best human model at present is human pancreatic islets. However, human islets are in very short supply for research applications. Peter Pieraccini, President and CEO comments, “If the work on the adipose stem cells is successful, the trans-differentiated cells could be a potential new research tool that ZenBio could offer to its clients for drug development and conducting other studies on the control of human insulin synthesis and secretion.”

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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