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ZenBio, Inc Awarded Phase II SBIR Grant to Develop a Drug Discovery Platform Using Human Islets

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC - ZenBio, Inc. announced that it has been awarded a Phase II SBIR grant to continue its human islet research program. The award from the National Institutes of Health will fund the development of a novel high throughput 3D islet platform using human primary islets and induced disease state models.

Diabetes and diabetes-related co-morbidities are an enormous burden to our healthcare system. Although there has been significant progress in defining the causative factors and molecular mechanisms involved in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, it remains an overwhelming challenge to identify efficacious therapeutic modalities. Human islets are currently the most physiologically relevant system to examine potential therapeutics that modulate insulin production or secretion, and factors that regulate growth and apoptosis of islet β -cells. However, research platforms and tools to accelerate drug development that utilize human islets are not readily available. To address this need ZenBio is developing novel human primary islet systems for research and drug discovery. "Our initial phase I SBIR studies were to develop and determine the feasibility of high throughput platforms using human islets as well as to induced disease-like phenotypes indicative of diabetic and obese states for drug screening." said Sarah Compton Ph.D. Director of Cell Biology and Principal Investigator of this program. "This phase II program will focus on the natural progression of these platforms which consists of the commercialization of 3D islet microtissues called "pseudoislets" for research and establishing additional human islet-based assays including a quantitative high content imaging screening system. We believe that these custom and flexible islet platforms will make a significant impact on diabetes drug discovery efforts."

The addition of these human islet platforms and services will expand ZenBio's existing cell-based systems and screening platforms focused on metabolic disease and related disorders.

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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