Press Release:

Zen-Bio, Inc and Pennington Biomedical Research Center Collaborate to Identify Therapeutic Agents from Natural Products

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Zen-Bio, Inc. and Pennington Biomedical Research Center (PBRC) announce a collaboration to identify natural compounds for the prevention and treatment of metabolic disease and obesity. The initial phase of the program includes screening thousands of botanical extracts for their beneficial effects on primary human abdominal fat cells and adult stem cells. The Botanical Research Center at PBRC, a collaborative center between PBRC and the Center of Agriculture and the Environment of Rutgers University, provides a unique library of botanical extracts. Researchers from Zen-Bio will screen the compounds with their human fat-derived stem cell screening system. This program brings together the expertise of Zen-Bio and PBRC in metabolic disease research with that of the Botanical Research Center to discover natural therapeutics for obesity and diabetes.

"This program gives us a unique opportunity to identify natural products that impact the function of human abdominal fat and the progression of metabolic disease", stated Ben Buehrer, Vice President of Zen-Bio. "Both Zen-Bio and PBRC recognize the critical molecular differences between non-human and human tissue, and are diving right into human primary cell screening to eliminate costly artifacts. We also realize subcutaneous and abdominal fat have different roles in the progression of metabolic disease and are focusing on abdominal fat for that reason."

"This is exactly the kind of collaboration we hoped for when we started the Botanical Research Center here at PBRC," said William Cefalu, M.D., of Pennington Biomedical Research Center. "One of our goals was to find and test promising botanicals that may be effective in treating obesity, and equally as important, preventing the progression to diabetes. Clearly, obesity and diabetes increase heart disease risk and both are reaching epidemic levels. We believe we can make real progress quickly in our search for effective clinical interventions. "

The collaboration is funded in part by a Phase I Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Zen-Bio, Inc. is a leading provider of research tools for the study of human metabolic disease. The company, founded in 1995 performs contract research for major pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies around the world. The company pioneered tissue engineering with adult adipose-derived stem cells and is currently researching 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 our expertise in this field into successful treatments for metabolic diseases through research and development and strategic alliances. For more information visit the company website at www.zen-bio.com or call (919)-547-0692; 1-866-ADIPOSE or e-mail Peter Pieraccini peter@zen-bio.com

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The Pennington Biomedical Research Center's mission is to promote healthier lives through research and education in nutrition and preventive medicine.

The Center is a campus of the Louisiana State University System and conducts basic, clinical and population research. The research enterprise at the Center includes 80 faculty and more than 40 post-doctoral fellows who comprise a network of 50 laboratories supported by lab technicians, nurses, dieticians, support personnel, and 19 highly specialized core service facilities. The Center's nearly 600 employees occupy several buildings on the 234-acre campus. For information on the work of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, go to www.pbrf.org.

The Biotechnology Center of Agriculture and the Environment of Rutgers University's mission is to strengthen research and training in molecular biology applied to agriculture and the environment to provide a means for transferring new discoveries into practice and product development.

The Biotech Center has internationally recognized research programs in plant biology, animal science, microbiology, and environmental science addressing basic and applied issues of interest to the state, national, and international scientific community. Technology transfer is facilitated through cooperative research programs and interactions with New Jersey's many agricultural, chemical, environmental, and pharmaceutical corporations. http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~biotech/