



January 27, 2009

Status: Biotechnology Business News For Immediate Release

ZenBio, Inc. Awarded \$1.88 Million Phase II SBIR Grant for Mesothelial Cell Program

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC - ZenBio, Inc. announced that it has been awarded a Phase II SBIR grant to commercialize primary human peritoneal mesothelial cells. The \$1.88 million award from the National Institutes of Health will fund continued optimization and commercial development of this unique tool for cancer, obesity, and type 2 diabetes research.

Mesothelial cells are specialized epithelial cells that line the peritoneal, pleural, and pericardial cavities (as well as internal organs), providing a frictionless barrier that facilitates movement of organs and tissues. Pleural mesothelial cells are the target cells in asbestos-induced mesothelioma. Peritoneal mesothelial cells are the attachment points for metastasizing ovarian cancer cells, making them a potential target for cancer therapeutics. “These are highly active cells”, said Ben Buehrer, Ph.D., Vice President of ZenBio. “They secrete factors that can have local and systemic effects on several medical indications, from cancer to metabolic diseases.” The grant will allow ZenBio to make well-characterized mesothelial cells available to the wider research community.

Preliminary studies at ZenBio and elsewhere have revealed that mesothelial cells profoundly affect adipocyte function. “Many of the factors involved in the progression of obesity and diabetes are actually made and secreted in large amounts by mesothelial cells”, said Dr. Renee Lea-Currie, ZenBio’s Director of Cell Biology and the Principal Investigator of the program. “This grant will allow us to dig deeper into the obesity connection while supplying researchers with a validated human cell system for their own discovery efforts”.

>>>>MORE>>>>

Peter Pieraccini, President of ZenBio, commented, “This is a great opportunity for ZenBio. We will be commercializing a primary cell system that is a link in the cascade of events leading to obesity, diabetes, and common cancers.”



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.

For more information, contact:

Will Plentl, Director of Business Development
ZenBio, Inc.
Tel. (919)-547-0692; or 1-866-ADIPOSE
Email: will@zenbio.com
www.zenbio.com

ZenBio, Inc. 3200 Chapel Hill-Nelson Blvd. Suite 104 • P.O. Box 13888 • Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709

<<<END>>>