



April 20, 2010

ZenBio, Inc. Awarded a Phase I SBIR Grant to Develop Novel Human Cell-Based Models of Fatty Liver Disease

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC - ZenBio, Inc. announced that it has been awarded a Phase I SBIR grant to establish novel human cell-based models of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) that will be useful for basic research and as a potential drug development platform. The project stems from recent efforts at ZenBio, Inc. to develop methods for differentiating adipose tissue derived progenitor cells into hepatocyte-like cells. The current award from the National Institutes of Health will fund proof-of-concept studies that these human hepatocyte-like cells can be used to mimic the development of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in cell culture.

Obesity and Type 2 diabetes affect the lives of millions of people worldwide. In parallel with the increasing incidence of obesity and insulin resistance is the occurrence of NAFLD, a chronic hepatic disorder that may be affecting up to 25% of the general population; including a significant portion of pediatric cases. Several intracellular events leading to NAFLD and progression to non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) have been identified. However, the exact molecular mechanisms require further investigation, especially in human systems. Primary human hepatocytes are the most physiologically relevant cell-based model for *in vitro* hepatic function. However, the availability of primary human hepatocytes for cell-based applications is significantly limited. In order to address the market demand for relevant human cell-based models of hepatocyte function, ZenBio, Inc. is developing an alternative model based upon the differentiation of adipose tissue derived adult stem cells (ASC) to hepatocyte-like cells. Bentley Cheatham, Ph.D. (ZenBio's vice-president of R&D) stated, "We have data suggesting that the ASC-derived hepatocytes possess many of the characteristics of primary human hepatocytes, and are in the process of developing applications of these cells for use in basic research applications, cell therapy and drug development. Specifically, this Phase I project will focus on the utility of this novel human model system for the study of NAFLD."

>>>>MORE>>>>

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>>>