

Press Release 04/2009

Joint R&D project of University Hospital Tübingen, NMI (Reutlingen) and Curetis AG (Holzgerlingen) has received public funding for the development of effective tools to diagnose infections

This solution will save many lives

Holzgerlingen - Curetis AG has received a two-year grant of over 500.000 Euro under the ZIM Program ('Zentrales Innovationsprogramm Mittelstand'). The Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) program grant will support the development of novel approaches to diagnose infections. The joint project between the Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene in Tübingen (Germany), the Natural and Medical Sciences Institute (NMI), Reutlingen (Germany) and start-up Curetis AG aims at the development of new diagnostic solutions to detect hospital-acquired infections.

More and more frequently, scientist are raising the alarm about the ever increasing therapy resistance of bacteria as one of the major clinical challenges in the 21st century, most recently in the renowned New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). According to the NEJM, such antibiotic resistances even have the potential to jeopardize important achievements of modern medicine like chemotherapy or organ transplants. The lack of adequate diagnostic tools which can rapidly identify pathogens and antibiotic resistances is one of the main reasons why severe infections have become the third leading cause of death in the industrialized world.

"As long as the pathogen is not known the clinician is left in the dark and runs the risk of prescribing the wrong medication or starting therapy too late" explains Professor Dr. Ingo Autenrieth, Medical Director of the Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene in Tübingen, Germany.

In light of this, Curetis AG is focusing on the diagnostics of severe bacterial



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infections. A molecular diagnostics procedure developed in-house allows the rapid identification of pathogens and antibiotic resistance patterns. With conventional testing, it takes several days before test results are available. “Rapid testing with the Curetis solution provides the clinician with results within a few hours” says Prof. Autenrieth. “Those hours can become a matter of life and death which is why we assume that the Curetis solution will save many patients’ lives.”



Dr. Gerd Lüdke, Director Assay Development and one of the founders of Curetis AG explains the goals of the collaboration project: “We will advance the development of the Curetis platform solution for diagnosing hospital acquired infections, focusing on improvements to detection as well as on first preclinical testing of native samples.” The ZIM grant is seen as recognition for the work done thus far. We now look forward to intensifying our collaboration with both of our renowned partners”.

For five years, beginning in July 2008, the German program ‘Zentrales Innovationsprogramm Mittelstand’ offers funding opportunities for single, collaboration and network projects for small and medium sized companies striving for innovation. It forms the basis of the BMWi's technology support program and is aimed at reducing technical and financial risks of R&D projects and focuses on the quick commercialization of innovations.

The University of Tübingen's Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hygiene with its competence in clinical microbiology, environmental and hospital hygiene and the research of infectious diseases brings its tremendous clinical expertise to the project. The institute will be responsible for pre-clinical testing of the new approach, which is essential for product optimization.

The NMI, an application-oriented research institute located in Reutlingen, Germany, is assisting Curetis AG in the development of its micro-array based

detection method. The NMI's micro-array group is one of the world's leading research teams for this technology, and has helped Curetis to improve the simultaneous detection of numerous pathogens and antibiotic resistances. Prof. Dr. Hämmerle, director of the NMI, comments: "Micro-arrays will play a dominant role in modern diagnostics of infectious diseases once they can be performed easily and cost-efficiently, which is exactly what the Curetis solution will do."

Dr. Gerd Lüdke agrees with these comments: "The ZIM grant allows us to intensify the collaboration with the UKT and the NMI, thus leading to a much more efficient product development. As a result, Curetis products will be available earlier than anticipated to help overcome the clinical challenges caused by resistant pathogens."



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About Curetis AG, Holzgerlingen/Germany



Founded in 2007, Curetis is a molecular diagnostic company, focusing on the development and commercialization of reliable, fast and cost-effective tools for diagnosing severe infectious diseases. The diagnostic solutions of Curetis AG will enable rapid multiparameter pathogen and antibiotic resistance detection in only a few hours, a process that today can take up to days or even weeks with other techniques. The analytical equipment is so simple and robust in its design that it can be used for ubiquitous molecular microbiology testing. The universal platform will allow the future expansion into other clinical applications with additional market opportunities beyond infectious diseases.

About Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, Tübingen/Germany



The Institute's main focal points are on clinical microbiology, environmental and hospital hygiene, and the research of infectious diseases. The Institute carries out microbiological laboratory diagnostics for patients with infectious diseases from both the University Hospital Tübingen, patients from other hospitals and doctors' surgeries. At the Institute over 50 physicians, natural scientists and students are engaged in the research of disease processes in the event of infection, the prevention of infection, new antibiotics and probiotics, as well as new diagnostic methods.

About NMI Natural and Medical Sciences Institute, Reutlingen/Germany



The NMI is an application-oriented research institute that adheres to the rules of the free market, making the results of scientific study available to industry. The interdisciplinary approach of the NMI includes basic research as well as practical problem solving in the form of applied research and development, consulting, testing, measuring and analysis, scientific studies, and implementation in the fields of pharma- and biotechnology, biomedical technology as well as surface and interface technologies. The NMI makes use of interdisciplinary know-how, modern equipment, quality management processes and a network of companies including various branches of industry, in particular the life sciences.