ASX Announcement

Sirtex Medical announces expansion of its R&D programs to develop new oncology therapies and product enhancements

Sydney Australia, 18 April 2007: Australian-based biotechnology and medical device company, Sirtex Medical Limited (SRX), is pleased to announce a significant expansion of its R&D program to embrace new technological developments in oncology and further enhance its current SIR-Spheres® microspheres product.

Sirtex CEO, Gilman Wong, said the company was moving forward to expand the uses of its lead SIR-Spheres microspheres product and develop a suite of promising new therapies to encompass the three key non-surgical treatment options for liver cancer: radiation, hyperthermia, and drug delivery.

"We will continue to focus primarily on our successful SIR-Spheres microspheres product, which delivers targeted internal radiation to treat advanced primary and secondary liver tumours, and is available in 140 treatment centres around the world," Mr Wong said.

"In the longer term, however, our aim is to grow our business by developing innovative oncology therapies to provide cancer patients and their doctors with a wider choice of targeted, personalised treatment options. This Sirtex strategy is consistent with our stated aim since listing in 2000."

The field of oncology is evolving rapidly as the medical community's understanding of the causes of cancer increases and new technologies are developed to exploit this knowledge. Mr Wong said Sirtex is strongly committed to research to develop cutting edge technologies in order to maintain its position as a global leader in targeted therapies for liver cancer.

Evolution of SIR-Spheres microspheres

In recent months, Sirtex has established collaborations with a number of prestigious and highly regarded research organisations locally and internationally to work on new initiatives to enhance the use of SIR-Spheres microspheres.

Scientists at the Australian National University (ANU) and several academic institutions in the USA are working with Sirtex on technologies to improve the ability of doctors to more precisely calculate and deliver individualised patient-specific doses of SIR-Spheres microspheres.

Once properly proven and established, these new technologies will provide immediate benefits to patients undergoing SIR-Spheres treatment of their liver cancer. They will also be applicable to other microsphere-based therapies Sirtex is currently working on.

Targeted Hyperthermia

Sirtex's targeted hyperthermia project remains the company's most significant in-house research activity into non-surgical treatment options for liver cancer. Targeted heating of tumours may significantly enhance the effectiveness of SIR-Spheres microspheres, as well as various chemotherapy agents that may also be used.

The research effort in this area was bolstered last November when Sirtex's largest research partner in this venture, the University of Sydney, successfully obtained an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant for this project. The ARC will contribute $525,000 over three years to match a $300,000 cash contribution by Sirtex over the same period.

Hollow Microspheres

In another development, Sirtex has successfully negotiated an option agreement with NewSouth Innovations, the commercialisation company of the University of NSW, to obtain exclusive worldwide rights to its recently developed hollow, biodegradable microsphere technology.

Sirtex considers this to be a platform technology that could be used as a programmable and targeted delivery mechanism for a range of therapeutic agents, including different types of chemotherapy drugs.

While the work is still at an early stage, Sirtex is confident that this hollow microsphere technology has the potential to revolutionise the administration of existing and new anti-cancer agents.

Radioprotector Technology

Finally, Sirtex is pleased to announce that it will be exercising its rights under an option to take up the exclusive worldwide licence rights to radioprotector compounds and the underlying intellectual property being developed by the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, one of the leading cancer centres in the world. Radioprotector compounds offer a means of protecting healthy tissue from the harmful effects of exposure to ionising radiation, potentially providing enormous benefit to a range of cancer patients.

The initial motivation for the research program at Peter MacCallum was the potential of radioprotectors to ameliorate side-effects in patients undergoing conventional external beam radiotherapy treatment, but radioprotectors could also provide benefits when used in conjunction with SIR-Spheres microspheres.

The use of a radioprotector could expand the number of patients who are able to be treated with SIR-Spheres microspheres by increasing the safety margin in otherwise compromised patients. Such patients could include those who have only a very small reserve of normally functioning liver, or who have abnormal vascular anatomy that may result in unintended non-targeted delivery of SIR-Spheres microspheres to other organs.

Radioprotector compounds may also enable higher doses of SIR-Spheres microspheres to be used safely, leading to a better therapeutic outcome for patients.

In addition, there may be an important role for radioprotectors as part of Sirtex's plans to extend the application of SIR-Spheres microspheres beyond the liver.

In the context of conventional external beam radiotherapy treatment, the side effects that arise from unavoidable irradiation of normal tissues could be ameliorated by topical application of a radioprotector to the normal tissues at risk, prior to irradiation. Thus it is anticipated that a radioprotector compound may form the active component of a range of products such as topically applied creams, aerosols, suppositories or systemically administered drugs to suit a variety of potential needs. The patient groups that may benefit from such strategies include breast, head and neck, and prostate cancer.

As part of the arrangement with Peter MacCallum, Sirtex will commit $1,551,000 over two years to support a research program to be led by Associate Professor Roger Martin to develop an optimised lead candidate and formulation. This is in addition to a $265,000 NHMRC Development Grant awarded to Peter MacCallum for this project earlier this year. It is expected that clinical testing will commence following this two-year research program.

More details of each of these promising new developments will be announced in due course.

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For more information, visit our website at www.sirtex.com

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