NEUROME

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Neurome Receives Phase I SBIR Grant from the National Institutes of Health to Develop Novel Screening Platform to Assess Efficacy of Antidepressants

Results of behavioral assays in mouse models of depression will be correlated with 3-dimensional volumetric analysis of gene expression within the brains of these animals.

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, February 25, 2004 -- Neurome, Inc. announced today that it has received a Phase I grant from the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program to develop better predictive test systems along with specific biological markers for drug target expression patterns that will enable pharmaceutical companies to screen new chemical entities (NCEs) to obtain corresponding behavioral readouts and their neurobiological, gene- or protein- expression signatures.

According to Dr. Floyd E. Bloom, M.D., Neurome's Founding Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board, "This grant will allow us to undertake a novel approach to the development of new antidepressant medications, employing the inter-strain variations as a key to the underlying biological basis for vulnerability and therapeutic responsiveness."

Current behavioral tests and animal models of depression lack the necessary validations required to serve as robust and reliable *in vivo* screens for new chemical entities to treat depression. Phase I of this grant will demonstrate the feasibility of high-throughput gene expression mapping for identification of relevant markers that underlie differences in baseline performance in antidepressant behavioral tests. A small battery of tests, widely used by pharmaceutical companies and known to be predictive of antidepressant activity, will be employed to obtain behavioral endpoint measures that may then be used to correlate with the expression of depression-specific molecular markers. A high-throughput system for acquisition, analysis and 3D display of quantitative data related to depression will provide a platform for preclinical drug development, with broad utility for comprehensive analysis of differential gene expression patterns in the mouse brain.

Neurome will partner with PsychoGenics, Inc. (Hawthorne, New York) in the development of these screening platforms. Follow-on collaborations with pharmaceutical partners will take advantage of these products and tools in the discovery and development of new compounds to treat depression. “Demand for the Neurome Technologies has enabled us to establish partnerships with a number of large pharmaceutical companies", said Warren G. Young, Ph.D., Neurome’s President and Chief Technology Officer. "The growing trend among pharmaceutical companies to out-source key aspects of research and development provides unlimited opportunity for Neurome's proprietary technologies, designed to facilitate and optimize CNS drug discovery.”

Depression is a persistent and debilitating disorder that typically presents in discrete episodes that recur during a person’s lifetime. A high degree of variation exists among individuals with depression, in terms of symptoms and response to treatment, indicating that depression may have several complex and interacting causes. Depression is a serious medical condition, with attendant high economic costs. In any given year, depression affects approximately 19 million adults in the United States and is considered the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and worldwide.

About Neurome

Neurome, Inc., develops standardized, quantitative databases that accurately depict and integrate gene expression patterns in the three-dimensional context of the brain’s structures, circuits, and cells, and deploys these databases in primary research directed toward the discovery and development of gene targets for enhancement of brain function and treatment of brain-based disease. Neurome performs contract brain research for pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies while at the same time pursuing its own in-house and collaborative research protocols. The data collected from these efforts will populate an evolving, comprehensive database available by subscription and useful on a broad level for analyses of mouse models of brain function and disease. In this regard, the application of the Neurome technologies will provide rigorous, quantitative data that are optimally suited to the measurement of subtle cell-type specific shifts in gene expression, as well as progression and prevention of degenerative events affecting specific cell classes and brain regions. For more information, please visit Neurome’s website at www.neurome.com.