



**June 2004**

## **Synairgen signs collaboration agreement with Merck**

Merck Frosst Canada & Co. an affiliate of Merck & Co., Inc. situated in Kirkland, Quebec, Canada and Synairgen Ltd. situated in Southampton, United Kingdom, have entered into a basic research collaboration agreement to evaluate targets in the respiratory field focusing on mechanism of airway remodeling in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The details of the collaboration have not been disclosed.

Synairgen is a drug discovery company specialising in respiratory diseases with a focus on asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). These diseases are rapidly growing causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide and represent an increasing and largely unmet medical need. Synairgen aims to discover new drugs both in-house and via collaborations with industry partners using its in-house advanced models of human disease.

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### **Notes for editors:**

#### **1. Synairgen**

Synairgen was founded by Professor Stephen Holgate, Dr Donna Davies and Dr Ratko Djukanovic, a world-acknowledged respiratory research team from the University of Southampton. The Company was spun-out from the University in June 2003, supported by funding from IP2IPO Group plc. The focus of Synairgen is on identifying and out-licensing new pharmaceutical products which address the underlying causes of asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

#### **2. Asthma**

According to the World Health Organisation, between 100 and 150 million people around the globe suffer from asthma and this number is rising. Asthma prevalence in the UK is now 3-4 times higher in adults and 6 times higher in children than it was 25 years ago, and currently it accounts for 1,400 deaths in the UK per year. In the United States, there are approximately 17-20 million sufferers and the cost is estimated to be about \$13 billion per annum. There are limited therapies available for severe asthma and the potential for treatments satisfying this largely unmet need is significant, as demonstrated by the projected sales of \$3.3 billion in 2012 for Xolair<sup>®</sup>.

#### **3. COPD**

COPD encompasses a number of diseases, including the smoking-related lung diseases, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. The prevalence of COPD is estimated at 16-17% in the US and Europe. Globally it is killing 2.7 million people per annum and is forecast to become the third largest cause of death in the world by 2020. COPD is underserved by current treatments.

Sales of pharmaceutical products used to treat asthma and COPD in major pharmaceutical



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markets in 2002 were estimated to be \$7.0 billion and \$2.7 billion respectively and are forecast to reach \$12.8 billion and \$5.8 billion in 2012.

#### **4. The University of Southampton**

A leading UK teaching and research institution with a global reputation for leading-edge research and scholarship. The University, which celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2002, has 20,000 students and over 4,500 staff and plays an important role in the City of Southampton. Its annual turnover is in the region of £235 million.

#### **5. IP2IPO**

A specialist technology transfer investment company owned by Evolution Group plc, the investment bank quoted on the London Stock Exchange. IP2IPO business is the formation of long term partnerships with universities and its first such partnership was with the University of Oxford, under which IP2IPO acquired a 15 year interest in IP commercialised from the University's Chemistry department. In March 2002, IP2IPO entered into partnership with the University of Southampton [www.ip2ipo.com](http://www.ip2ipo.com).

**6. The Centre for Enterprise and Innovation** is the focus of entrepreneurial activity within the University of Southampton. Formed in September 2000, the office now employs around 20 people, focusing on the commercialisation of university intellectual property through the creation of start-up companies and opportunities for license. It provides business and funding advice, IP protection and management, commercial legal advice and contract negotiation.

#### **For further information:**

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