partnership brings us one step closer to our corporate goal to in-license 50% of our pipeline by 2010.'

PamGene and JPT partner in new approaches in kinase research

PamGene International BV (http://www.pamgene.com)and Jerini Peptide Technologies (http://www.jerini.com) have announced a partnership to develop and provide new technology for kinase research. Capitalizing upon PamGene's ability to generate kinetic read-out of multiple kinase activities on their 3-Dimensional Microarray Platform and JPT's advanced peptide expertise and extensive peptide libraries, it is hoped that significant benefits to signal transduction-focused medicinal chemistry groups will ensue.

It is expected that with this technology, the cost of the drug-discovery process can be reduced substantially as explained by Rob Ruijtenbeek, Head of Kinase Research at PamGene 'One of the main challenges in pharma R&D is improving compound selection. With PamGene's 96-well array platform and JPT's kinase peptide substrates, it is now possible to generate kinetic read-out of multiple kinase activities in one experiment. Additionally, we can analyse multiple conditions on a single plate, for example inhibitor concentration series. The high-content and high-quality kinetic data will allow much more intelligent selection and prioritization of leads that enter the subsequent expensive stages of drug development.'

Mike Schutkowski, Director of Jerini Peptide Technologies was equally buoyant, adding: 'Employing our PepSpot™ technology to rapidly synthesize large numbers of different peptides in parallel at very low cost has enabled us to develop versatile tools widely used for many biomedical applications, such as enzyme profiling, biological screening and immunological applications. We are delighted to see that our comprehensive peptide sets for kinase profiling are joined with PamGene's microarray platform to arrive at a unique combination of content and user-friendliness. There is no question that this will make peptide tools more readily accessible to many scientists and enable further advances in this field.'

Business was written by *Stephen Carney*

People

Awards

Bioinformatics scientists awarded the Max Planck Research Prize

Martin Vingron, director of the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics in Berlin (http://www.molgen.mpg.de) and Eugene W. Myers of the University of California, Berkeley (http://www.berkeley.edu/), were recently awarded the prestigious Max Planck Research Prize for International Cooperation.

At the award ceremony in Stuttgart, the scientists received a cash award of €750,000, which represents a significant increase over previous years, when awards were €150,000, given to 12 researchers. The prize is funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Max Planck Society and the Germany Ministry of Education and Research.

Myers is widely acknowledged as one of the founders of the discipline of computational molecular biology. While heading the bioinformatics department at Celera, he developed tools to allow the sequencing of large sections of DNA from the smaller sequences of DNA that were generated. Vingron, however, has been more involved in studies on the regulation of gene expression.

Vingron aims to use his award to help turn Berlin into a 'centre of intellectual creativity' in bioinformatics. He intends to do this by supporting travel for Germany-based bioinformaticists and by hosting summer seminars at the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics, with invited international speakers.

Appointments

Departure of Hannes Smarason from deCODE genetics

Hannes Smarason, Executive Vice President and Senior Business Officer, is to leave deCODE genetics in order to concentrate upon his position as chairman of the board of Icelandair. Smarason will, however, continue to act as consultant for deCODE.

When interviewed, Kari Stefansson, CEO of decode commented that: 'Hannes joined deCODE shortly after its formation and in his seven years with the company, he has made a very significant contribution to deCODE's growth from a leader in human genetics research to an integrated biopharmaceutical company.'

By way of reply, Smarason said: 'It has been a privilege to work with Kari and the many talented people at deCODE. My time at deCODE has been both exciting and rewarding, and I am very proud to have contributed to building one of the most dynamic companies in biotechnology. deCODE is a remarkable enterprise and I look forward to following its success. I wish to thank everyone at deCODE for sharing with me their enthusiasm for making better medicine.'

Sir William Castell made Vice Chairman of GE

Sir William Castell has recently been appointed to the post of Vice Chairman of the board of directors of the General Electric Company (GE; http://www.ge.com). Castell will continue to be based in Chalfont St Giles, UK.

Castell had been with Amersham since1989, assuming the post of Chief Executive. Prior to that, he had been with the Wellcome Foundation, where he had a number of posts. Amongst his honours, Castell was recently made Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order, to add to his Knighthood, which he received in 2000.

GE chairman and CEO, Jeff Immelt, was enthusiastic about the appointment, stating: 'We are excited to have Bill Castell added to our Board after his recent addition to the GE Corporate Executive Office, where he joined Dennis Dammerman, Bob Wright and myself,' Immelt continued 'Bill is a great leader who understands how to leverage technology. His passion, vision and experience will be an asset to all of our businesses.'

People was written by *Stephen Carney*

Conference reports

Conference participants who wish to cover a particular meeting should contact:
Dr Jayne Carey,
e-mail: DDT@drugdiscoverytoday.com

1359-6446/04/$ – see front matter PII: S1359-6446(04)03151-4