

## onepharm and EMBL seal strategic collaboration in influenza research

Vienna, April, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 – onepharm, a Viennese biotech company and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), a leading European research center agreed on a strategic collaboration in influenza research. Based on EMBL's strong experience with the structural biology of the influenza virus polymerase - the "viral replication machinery" – and onepharm's established in-vitro and in-vivo screening tools for evaluating anti-viral activity, novel small molecules to combat influenza will be developed. EMBLEM, the technology transfer company of EMBL grants onepharm an exclusive license option on two related patents.

### **PB2 cap-binding site – a new promising target for anti-influenza drugs**

Influenza is still one of the major pandemic threats and besides vaccines, only very few therapeutic drugs have shown substantial effects in the treatment of the disease. At the moment, the PB2 cap-binding site of the trimeric viral RNA-dependent polymerase is one of the most promising targets for novel anti-influenza drugs. "At EMBL, we have identified the exact structure of the PB2 cap-binding domain and how it binds capped RNAs based on a crystal structure. We have also developed in-silico models and high-throughput binding assays to identify novel antiviral drugs," explains Stephen Cusack, Head of EMBL Grenoble. "Interestingly, the viral polymerase is highly conserved, thus, evolution of resistant virus strains will be less challenging than for other targets."

onepharm has been active in the field of antiviral drug development for the past 3 years and has established both, qualified cellular screening assays and in-vivo models in different species with its collaboration partners. "We are very excited about this new opportunity in the influenza field," says Bernhard Küenburg, CEO of onepharm. "Through our experience in this area we can substantially contribute to identify a new lead candidate and promote it through preclinical and early clinical trials. We are also very proud to be a collaboration partner of a leading research institute such as EMBL."

EMBLEM has granted onepharm an exclusive license option for the technology involved with this influenza project and will contribute with computer modelling as well as primary screening. Onepharm will execute cellular assays as well as preliminary animal studies. Both partners will jointly provide new screening candidates from their medicinal chemistry capabilities.

### **About onepharm**

onepharm, a Vienna-based Biotech company, was founded jointly by the management and Avir Green Hills Biotechnology in 2005. The company focuses on the development of its lead candidate OPM-3023 in chronic inflammatory indications such as periodontitis, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease. In addition, new derivatives of OPM-3023 are synthesized and screened to understand their anti-inflammatory and antiviral activities. This medicinal chemistry program (ASPEX Vienna) is funded by the ZIT (Zentrum für Innovation and Technologie GmbH) of the City of Vienna. To this date, onepharm has been able to attract funds exceeding EUR 8.5 million, including equity capital, subsidized loans and research grants.

### **About EMBL**

The European Molecular Biology Laboratory is a basic research institute funded by public research monies from 20 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and associate member state Australia. Research at EMBL is conducted by approximately 80 independent groups covering the spectrum of molecular biology. The Laboratory has five units: the main Laboratory in Heidelberg, and Outstations in Hinxton (the European Bioinformatics Institute), Grenoble, Hamburg, and Monterotondo near Rome. The cornerstones of EMBL's mission are: to perform basic research in molecular biology; to train scientists, students and visitors at all levels; to offer vital services to scientists in the member states; to develop new instruments and methods in the life sciences and to actively engage in technology transfer activities. EMBL's International PhD Programme has a student body of about 170. The Laboratory also sponsors an active Science and Society programme. Visitors from the press and public are welcome.

**About EMBLEM Technology Transfer GmbH (<http://www.embl-em.de/>)**

EMBL Enterprise Management Technology Transfer GmbH (EMBLEM) is an affiliate and the commercial arm of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL). EMBL established in 1974 is a basic research institute funded by public research funds from 20 member states, including most of the EU, Switzerland and Israel and the associated member state Australia. EMBLEM identifies, protects and commercialises the intellectual property developed in the EMBL-world, from EMBL-alumni and from non-EMBL third parties. EMBLEM facilitates and accelerates the transfer of innovative technology from basic research to industry by working closely with industrial partners spanning the biotech, pharmaceutical, IT and mechanical/electrical engineering markets.

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