News

ChanTest
Ion Channels / GPCRs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ChanTest Acquires Applied Cell Sciences

Expanded drug discovery and development services, cell lines, and reagents now cover nearly half of the known drugable genome

CLEVELAND, Ohio (February 26, 2009) – The leading experts in ion channels and GPCR (G-protein coupled receptors) – key to drug discovery, development, and safety – are now united. ChanTest, the leading provider of ion channel testing services and validated cell lines, announced that it has acquired Rockville, Maryland-based Applied Cell Sciences. ACS is a contract research organization (CRO) specializing in GPCRs. The combined company will maintain both facilities in Rockville and Cleveland. Jesse Baumgold, Ph.D., who has led ACS since its inception in 2004, has been named ChanTest vice president of business development and product strategy. He will continue to direct the company's operations in Rockville. Terms of the acquisition were not disclosed.

Applied Cell Sciences products and services include optimized GPCR functional analysis tools, high-throughput screening reagents and reagent-development services, stable GPCR cell lines, cell membranes for binding studies, cryopreserved growth-arrested cells, custom cell line construction, gene-to-screen cell line construction and validation, large-scale cell cryopreservation, and specialized screening services. Going forward, ACS products and services will be marketed under the ChanTest name.

"We are now uniquely positioned to serve the drug discovery and safety needs of pharmaceutical and biotech customers with the most-comprehensive portfolio available of ion channel and GPCR services, reagents, and cell lines – covering nearly half of the known drugable genome," said ChanTest President and Chief Executive Officer, Arthur M. "Buzz" Brown, M.D., Ph.D. "The ChanTest library currently contains 84 ion channel-expressing cell lines, and ACS has 48 GPCRs. However, the end result is much more than a simple expansion of our respective products and services. This acquisition is the perfect fit, where one plus one equals five. Clichés, yes, but with ChanTest and ACS together as one company, they really do apply. Ion channels and GPCRs are natural partners, critical and often-interrelated components of cell signaling. GPCRs are implicated in many diseases and targets of many modern medicinal drugs, while ion channels can be the source of unintended negative side effects. They can also serve as useful drug targets since ion channels control major bodily functions, including excitation, contraction, secretion, and fluid volume. Thus, while ion channels and ion channel-GPCR combinations have always been important as safety and discovery targets, access via the modern paradigm of high-throughput screening has not been previously available. ChanTest's new integrated ion channel-GPCR services and reagents overcome this obstacle. And thanks to the generous support of the Ohio Department of Development's Third Frontier Program, we continue to innovate. By the end of 2009, our library will include ~120 ion channel-expressing and ~60 GPCR-expressing cell lines, as well as 10 ion channel/GPCR combination cell lines."

Dr. Brown continued, "A successful entrepreneur, with 25 years of experience in GPCR, Jesse Baumgold has assembled at ACS a world-class team of molecular biology and tissue-culture experts with significant experience in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. ChanTest is well-known as the world's most trusted ion services company. By pooling our scientific knowledge, technical skill sets, marketing, and business expertise, we can propel this seminal science forward and offer customers a more-complete assessment of a compound's promise in discovery testing – or a drug's safety profile during preclinical development. ACS's large-scale tissue culture capabilities and its division-arrest expertise will also make management of ChanTest's ion channel library more efficient."

Commenting on the benefits of having both ion channel and GPCR expertise under one umbrella, Dr. Baumgold explained, “GPCRs and ion channels interact and one can either trigger or exaggerate the effect of the other. Understanding the mechanisms of action for GPCRs and ion channels individually and together is therefore critical in both drug discovery and safety studies. For example, in the safety arena, it is well known that drugs targeting GPCRs, such as H1 histamine receptors, may produce sudden cardiac death by blocking the cardiac HERG ion channel. ChanTest’s scientists pioneered the HERG assay essential to assess this risk. On the discovery side, the central nervous system’s ‘fight-or-flight’ reaction is mediated by cardiac GPCR β-receptors activating cardiac calcium channels, thereby increasing cardiac pumping. Drugs may affect function of the heart via β-receptors, calcium channels, or both. We at ACS are honored to become a part of ChanTest – and excited by the prospect of working with our new colleagues to serve our customers better.”

ChanTest’s acquisition of ACS has been executed to ensure continuity of management, quality science, and service to clients. Customers are encouraged to contact their existing ChanTest or ACS representative to learn about the combined company’s expanded portfolio of cell-based assays and reagents, new division-arrested cell lines, membrane preparations, and large cell line scale-up capabilities.

About the New ChanTest – The Ion Channel/GPCR Company (www.chantest.com)
The leading experts in ion channels and GPCR (G-protein coupled receptors) – ChanTest and Applied Cell Sciences (ACS) – are now united to help global pharmaceutical and biotech customers speed the drug-discovery and development process, save time and money, and ultimately – to help make better, safer drugs. The new ChanTest offers integrated ion channel and GPCR services (both automated high-throughput and GLP), cell lines, membranes, and reagents that cover nearly half of the known drugable genome. Since its inception in 1998, ChanTest has tested more than 20,000 compounds for more than 500 pharmaceutical and biotech companies worldwide. ChanTest continues to expand its library of ion channel- and ion channel/GPCR-expressing cell lines – the most comprehensive in the world – with funding from the Ohio Department of Development’s Third Frontier Program. Now, for the first time, customers can profile the efficacy and selectivity of drug leads against an extensive set of ion channels and GPCRs in functional, cell-based assays. ChanTest can screen drug leads, or large compound collections, against its entire catalog or against specific books in the catalog. Because of ChanTest’s seminal role in this field, along with the company’s uncompromising commitment to quality, ChanTest was named “most trusted fee-for-service provider” for ion channel screening in the HTStec Ion Channel Trends Survey for two years in a row. ChanTest is based in Cleveland, Ohio. For more information, e-mail NewChantest@chantest.com.

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