

## **Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum Concludes License Agreement with Start-Up Biotechnology Company**

The Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum (German Cancer Research Center) licenses to MTM Laboratories AG (MTM = Molecular Tools in Medicine), Heidelberg, the international rights to use three of its patents, thereby acquiring shares in the company. The patents are based on inventions made with the decisive participation of Professor Magnus von Knebel Doeberitz, now head of the Section of Molecular Diagnostics and Therapy at Heidelberg University Surgical Hospital, during his time as a researcher at the Center. "This is the second agreement under which the Center acquires shares in a company in return for patent licensing", explains Dr. Josef Puchta, Administrative Member of the Management Board of the Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum.

MTM Laboratories develops techniques for early cancer diagnosis and determining the stage of a cancer. These techniques are based on molecular changes which occur in cancer cells or their precursors and which can be detected either in the hereditary material or in proteins. Thanks to the license agreement signed with the Center, MTM Laboratories can now make use of a number of such "molecular markers". These markers are currently being tested for use in cancer diagnostics in close collaboration with clinical groups on a national and international level.

In the area of early cancer detection, clinical trials have already shown a major success: Using a marker for cervical cancer that makes it possible to identify even individual cells as tumor cells or their precursors, the quality and reliability of early detection methods can be significantly enhanced. Worldwide, cervical cancer is the second most frequent cancer affecting women.

Ongoing intensive research efforts are aimed at developing more such molecular-diagnostic methods for other types of tumors. The success of cancer treatment depends crucially on the stage of the disease at the time of diagnosis. In most cases, recovery is possible if a tumor is detected early and the spreading of tumor cells can be prevented from the start. This, however, has been accomplished far too rarely up to now.

Dr. Rüdiger Ridder, head of R&D, and Dr. Christina von Knebel Doeberitz, head of Strategic Project Planning at MTM Laboratories, are convinced that "better methods of early cancer diagnosis using molecular-biological tools will contribute significantly to bringing down cancer mortality". Currently, numerous trials on an international level are being conducted to determine how the detection of scattered tumor cells can help assess the extent of the disease and the efficacy of new treatment approaches. Within the framework of clinical trials of international pharmaceutical companies, the techniques and tools established at MTM Laboratories are already being utilized.

MTM Laboratories was founded in fall 1999 by scientists and doctors from Heidelberg University Hospitals, together with Professor Magnus von Knebel Doeberitz, in collaboration with researchers from the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, EMBL, and the Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum. A special feature underlying the company's concept is a close liaison between medicine and basic molecular-biological research. Dr. Peter Pack, formerly in charge of automated production of recombinant antibodies at MorphoSys, a biotech company based in Munich, is among the founding members of MTM Laboratories and has now been appointed board member.

Heidelberg Innovation GmbH supported the start of the enterprise with its early-phase program designed to pave the way from a business idea to the foundation of a company by offering financial and content-related assistance. The equity capital needed for the foundation of MTM was provided, among others, by the seed capital fund, "Heidelberg Innovation GmbH & Co, BioScience Venture KG", acting as lead investor, and Mannheim LLC acting as co-investor.

The task of the Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum in Heidelberg (German Cancer Research Center, DKFZ) is to systematically investigate the mechanisms of cancer development and to identify cancer risk factors. The results of this basic research are expected to lead to new approaches in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. The Center is financed to 90 percent by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and to 10 percent by the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg. It is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers (Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft Deutscher Forschungszentren e.V.).

This press release is available at [www.dkfz.de/pressemitteilungen](http://www.dkfz.de/pressemitteilungen)

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