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Skuldtech Secures EUR 1 Million to Develop New Diagnostics for Alzheimer's Disease

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Montpellier, France, September 11, 2013 - Skuldtech, a genomic biomarker company specialized in developing diagnostic tests, announces today that it has secured EUR 1 million in funding from Bpifrance (French public financing structure) as part of a project on Alzheimer's disease that has received funding of EUR 8.6 million in total. The program is planned to last for four years, with the first results expected in 2018.

Skuldtech has joined forces with AB Science for this program, with the aim of developing a new therapy for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. As part of the program, Skuldtech will develop a companion diagnostic for AB Science's masitinib molecule and a diagnostic for the validity of cognitive tests and tests to predict the progression of Alzheimer's disease.

Using blood samples taken as part of the Phase III trial of masitinib in Alzheimer's disease, Skuldtech will identify the blood biomarkers that will help make simple, reliable diagnostic tests available as a matter of routine. This will result in treatments that can be tailored to the patient and the ability to monitor sufferers as their disease progresses. The clinical trial of masitinib was launched in Europe and other countries in May 2013. It expects to recruit a total of 400 patients. Blood samples from these patients will contribute to the development of a companion diagnostic by making it possible to identify those individuals most likely to benefit from the treatment.

This approach has already proven successful in the development of a new treatment for pancreatic cancer that combines gemcitabine and masitinib, where Skuldtech identified new biomarkers predicting a favorable response to treatment. The results of this clinical study led to an application to the European Medicines Agency for Marketing Authorization (MA) for masitinib in combination with companion biomarkers.

Using further blood samples, Skuldtech will also develop a diagnostic for the validity of cognitive tests and tests predicting the progression (slow or rapid) of Alzheimer's disease.

This project builds on Skuldtech's recent success in identifying blood biomarkers associated with a cognitive score. The company identified two sets of new blood markers, each associated with two trisomy 21 patient populations with low and high IQs respectively. The results of this study were published in the European Journal of Human Genetics in February 2013 (i). By describing the blood transcriptional profile of each group, Skuldtech identified specific biomarkers corresponding to a level of response in cognitive tests. The company hopes to emulate this result in the Alzheimer's disease program.

Skuldtech is keen to use the funding to capitalize on its broadband sequencing-based technological platform, pairing it with proprietary bioinformatics and biostatistics programs to measure and confirm the stage of progression of Alzheimer's disease.

"This new partnership to work on Alzheimer's disease will strengthen Skuldtech's position in the field of personalized medicine and in the development of companion diagnostics associated with new treatments in phases of clinical trials," said Didier Ritter, CEO, Skuldtech. "As well as bringing new diagnostics to market, we are also open to similar partnerships with other biotech companies or with pharmaceutical laboratories."

Alzheimer's is the most frequently occurring neurodegenerative disease in the world, affecting around 6 per cent of over-65s. In the US, it is the sixth most common cause of mortality in the population (Source: American Alzheimer Association).

(i) Megarbane et al: 'The intellectual disability of trisomy 21: differences in gene expression in a case series of patients with lower and higher IQ'

About Skuldtech

Skuldtech is an innovative biotechnology company specialized in the discovery of new biological markers and the development of new diagnostic tests. Biomarkers identified and selected by the company's scientific team are derived from its technology platform. The technology platform associates high-throughput sequencing, quantitative RT-PCR, proprietary bioinformatics and biostatistics programs. It is the result of 14 years of development and technical expertise in analyzing gene expression. Leveraging its unique scientific expertise analyzing gene expression in blood cells and whole blood, Skuldtech focuses personalized medicine and the development of companion and patient stratification tests to meet the increasing need for new treatments that are better adapted to patient profiles. Founded in 1999, Skuldtech is located at the Montpellier Biopole campus in Montpellier, France. The company is a member of the Euromediag/Eurobiomed, Canceropole Grand Sud Ouest (Cancer Centre of Southwest France) and Biomeridies clusters.

For more information: <http://www.skuldtech.com>

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