

CPGR and UCB scientists look for biomarkers to enhance influenza vaccination programs

Centre for Proteomic and Genomic Research (CPGR) to use its expertise in protein array technology in search for immune correlates of influenza vaccination

For immediate release

Cape Town, South Africa, 17 June 2010 – CPGR (Cape Town, South Africa) today announced that it is teaming up with scientists at UBC (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada) in a quest to identify immune correlates of response to vaccination in patients treated with seasonal influenza vaccines. In the biomarker discovery project, the CPGR will heavily rely on its comprehensive expertise in developing multiplex protein array-based antibody profiling assays and related computational solutions for enhanced bioinformatic data-analysis. The ultimate aim is to create a biomarker signature assay suitable for companion diagnostic purposes.

The CPGR was founded in 2006 as part of a government initiative to provide scientists in South Africa with state-of-the-art analytical services, technical expertise, project support and collaborative research capabilities in the fields of genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics and bioinformatics. The Centre has a particular interest in translational research and advancing scientific findings from the bench to the market, and ultimately to boost the development of a thriving biotech economy in South Africa. As part of these efforts one of the organization's aims is to create a successful track record of integrated R&D projects in areas such as drug development, biomarkers and agribiotech.

"The ability to reliably measure biomarkers that can serve as a proxy for response to treatment has the potential to improve the way clinical trials and vaccination programs are being designed significantly", said Reinhard Hiller, Managing Director of the CPGR. "If a similar approach is used to determine the immune reactivity status of subjects in advance of vaccination, including the ability to predict response or side-effects, it has the potential to significantly safe costs in these programs too. We are delighted that expertise at the CPGR is adding value to this exciting project, knowing of course that the approach we follow will be directly applicable to other infectious diseases that are pressing on the African continent."

Dr. Tobias Kollmann from BC Children's Hospital and the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada added: "Infectious pathogens, including influenza virus, do not respect borders - borders between countries or scientific disciplines. Using the combined force of extensive molecular and bioinformatic capacity at CPGR in Cape Town and the expertise in human vaccine studies accumulated in our Vaccine Evaluation Center in Vancouver is an example of how studies related to infections and vaccine mediated protection should be approached. Most likely this is the only approach to outsmart these pathogens." UBC has a strong interest and multiple ongoing projects in Africa. The UBC based VEC is one of the world's leader in human clinical vaccine trials.

About CPGR

The Centre for Proteomic & Genomic Research (CPGR) is an integrated core technology facility, founded in South Africa in 2006 as a not-for-profit organization through a grant provided by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) by way of its investment vehicles the Cape Biotech Trust (CBT) and PlantBio (PB), recently merged into the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). Visit www.cpgr.org.za for more information or contact info@cpgr.org.za with specific requests.

About Technology Innovation Agency

TIA is a public entity aimed at enhancing the country's capacity to translate a greater proportion of local research and development into commercial technology products and services. Visit www.tia.org.za for more information.