



## **Hybrigenics acquires worldwide rights to inecalcitol, a vitamin D analogue**

**Paris, February 7, 2006.** Hybrigenics SA announced that it has acquired a license for the worldwide exclusive rights to inecalcitol, a synthetic analogue of vitamin D, for all clinical indications. Hybrigenics intends to focus on an oral formulation to develop inecalcitol in cancer indications, such as advanced androgen-independent prostate cancer, and expects this acquisition to rapidly move its R&D pipeline towards clinical development.

Vitamin D analogues are well known for their antiproliferative properties on psoriatic skin cells, but also on a wide variety of cancer cells. However, their therapeutic use has often been limited by hypercalcemia, a major physiological effect of natural vitamin D. The big advantage of inecalcitol is that it has a much lower hypercalcemic activity *in vivo* (100-200 times less than calcitriol, the active metabolite of vitamin D), and yet shows a more than 10-fold stronger inhibition of cancer cell growth *in vitro*.

Inecalcitol was discovered by a team of Belgian scientists from the Catholic University of Leuven, led by Professor R. Bouillon, and from the University of Gent led by Professors M. Vandewalle and P. De Clercq. Inecalcitol was then developed up to Phase II in psoriasis by topical administration by Theramex, an affiliate of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, a company specialized in women's health based in Monaco. Continuation of the psoriasis development or the use of inecalcitol in other indications, such as hyperparathyroidism, will be partnered, while cancer indications will be pursued by Hybrigenics.

*"I am proud to see the development of inecalcitol widened to cancer by Hybrigenics, because inecalcitol really has the potential to be effective and well tolerated, thanks to its unique dissociation factor between hypercalcemia and cellular activity,"* said Professor Roger Bouillon from the Catholic University of Leuven.

*"Inecalcitol is a wonderful opportunity for Hybrigenics to have a product in clinical development in the near future,"* said Remi Delansorne, Hybrigenics' Chief Executive Officer. *"More importantly, it may well bring an additional therapeutic benefit to refractory prostate cancer patients when combined with Taxotere<sup>®</sup>, because calcitriol, the natural metabolite of vitamin D, has already shown some signs of efficacy in this clinical setting."*

Detailed financial terms of the licensing agreement between University of Gent, Catholic University of Leuven, Theramex and Hybrigenics were not disclosed.

**About Hybrigenics:** [www.hybrigenics.com](http://www.hybrigenics.com) <<http://www.hybrigenics.com>>

Hybrigenics is a biotechnology company dedicated to the discovery of molecules active against targets validated using the company's proprietary proteomics and bioinformatics technologies. The company is carrying out its own research programs by screening chemical libraries of small organic molecules against validated targets in oncology. Hybrigenics is also exploring opportunities to in-license potential anticancer agents at an early clinical stage, such as inecalcitol.

Hybrigenics also offers research services through access to its Yeast Two-Hybrid (Y2H) Screening platform and bioinformatics-based analysis of protein-protein interactions. Its fee-for-service activities have received ISO 9001:2000 certification. Its customers are public and private laboratories involved in the identification and validation of targets in all biological or therapeutic areas.

**About Merck:** [www.merck.de](http://www.merck.de)

Merck is a global pharmaceutical and chemical company with sales of EUR 5.9 billion in 2004, a history that began in 1668, and a future shaped by 28,900 employees in 54 countries. Its success is characterized by innovations from entrepreneurial employees. Merck's operating activities come under the umbrella of Merck KGaA, in which the Merck family holds a 73% interest and free shareholders own the remaining 27%. The former U.S. subsidiary, Merck & Co., has been completely independent of the Merck Group since 1917.

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