August Updates: People and Places

JAX meets CrownBio

The Jackson Laboratory has announced a collaboration with **Crown Bioscience** for preclinical oncology and immuno-oncology research and development. Crown Bioscience will recommend animal models provided by the Jackson Laboratory to their clients while researchers at JAX facilities will have special access to CrownBio's research services, including their PDX technology platforms, through the collaboration.

Auro Nair, president of JAX® Mice, Clinical & Research Services, commented in a press release, "By harnessing our complementary strengths, this agreement allows us to propel scientific research and drug discovery globally by improving access to the most advanced and highest quality pre-clinical research models and services. Additionally, JAX research teams will be able to advance basic biological discoveries for therapies much more rapidly by utilizing the world's largest collection of PDX and cell-line models and services from CrownBio."

Zebrafish diagnostics at Charles River

Charles River is partnering with **Fish Vet Group**, an aquatic veterinary provider based in Portland, ME, to provide zebrafish health surveillance and diagnostic testing services to research clients. Per the company's press release, testing previously performed by Charles River will now be completed by Fish Vet Group at its facility. Fish Vet Group received USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service approval of its US facility and diagnostic tests in 2015.

New animal facility in Luxembourg

The **University of Luxembourg** is getting ready to open a new animal research facility at its Belval Campus. Construction of the facility, which will house 6,000 rodents for neurodegenerative diseases, cancer, and inflammation research, began last December. It is expected to open as part of the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine in September 2017, and the site's operators hope to obtain AAALAC accreditation in the future.

A migraine blueprint

BlackThorn Therapeutics, a biopharmaceutical company from San Francisco, CA, targeting neurobehavioral disorders, has received a grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke to develop a drug to treat migraines. The grant is funded as part of the Blueprint Neurotherapeutics Network, a collaborative effort from the NIH and its research centers to support small molecule drug discovery from basic research through development into the clinic.

BlackThorn will use the award, worth up to $8 million, to further develop kappa opioid receptor (KOR) antagonists. KOR antagonists are thought to regulate the negative effects of stress, which has been linked to migraine pain in an animal model of triptan medication overuse. Principle Investigator of the grant, Rob Jones of BlackThorn, will collaborate with Edward Roberts and Hugh Rosen of the Scripps Research Institute and Frank Porreca of the University of Arizona.

Another go at Duchenne muscular dystrophy

Biopharmaceutical company **Sarepta Therapeutics** of Cambridge, MA, has partnered with the French non-profit research organization **Genethon** to jointly develop treatments for Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD). Genethon has recently demonstrated proof-of-concept of a new gene therapy in a large animal model of DMD and will be responsible for the early development work.

Sarepta's CEO, Edward Kaye, commented, "This partnership brings together our collective experience in Duchenne drug development and Genethon's particular expertise in gene therapy for rare diseases. We look forward to working with Genethon given their knowledge, large infrastructure and state-of-the-art manufacturing capabilities to advance next generation therapies for DMD."

Sarepta's Exondys 51 was the first therapy approved by the FDA to treat DMD in the United States, but is only indicated for patients that have a specific dystrophin gene mutation—affecting about 13% of the DMD population. Under the current agreement, Sarepta has the option to co-develop the Genethon's micro-dystrophin program, which can potentially target the majority of DMD patents, and includes exclusive U.S. commercial rights.

CAREERS UPDATE

Stanford researcher **Karl Deisseroth** has received the second Fresenius Research Prize. The prize was established in 2013 by the Else Kroner-Fresenius Foundation, to be awarded every four years in recognition of achievement in medical research. Deisseroth will receive 3.5 million euros for his laboratory and an additional 500,000 euros for personal use.

Deisseroth, who is also a current Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator, is considered a pioneer in optogenetic technology in animal models and in hydrogel-tissue chemistry. He also has clinical interest in depression and continues to see psychiatric patients. Stanford president Marc Tessier-Lavigne commented in a press release, "We are proud that Karl has been recognized for his groundbreaking discoveries... Application of his pioneering technologies by scientists worldwide is accelerating understanding and development of therapies for debilitating neurological and psychological diseases, and Karl's own research has provided deep insight into circuit mechanisms of depression."