

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

VECTOR MAY HELP DIRECT OXFORD VIROLOGY

LONDON—A U.K. R&D company with only a dozen employees has established a potentially important product marketing deal with the major scientific center in Siberia. Tiny Oxford Virology (OV, London) has secured the exclusive right to market a large range of research biochemicals and biological insecticides developed by Nauncho-proizvodstvennoe Objedinenie "Vector" (NPO Vector, Novosibirsk). NPO Vector maintains a staff of 4,500 including 240 biologists and virologists and 300 production personnel. OV will also act on the U.S.S.R. institution's behalf in establishing licensing agreements and joint ventures with third parties.

The deal is steeped in insecurity: uncertainties surrounding the quality of Siberian products coupled with OV's inexperience in marketing. NPO will supply products on consignment despite the absence of specified sales targets for OV, a reflection of both parties' need for hard currency. Oxford Virology's marketing manager, Richard Ackers, also hopes to soon sign up two other smaller Soviet manufacturing organizations under similar terms.

Personal contacts involving Derek Lennon, OV's executive chairman, and consultant David Bishop of the NERC Institute of Virology (Oxford) triggered the deal. When Bishop was in Moscow at a scientific meeting just after the U.S.S.R. had "opened up," it became clear that there was scope for collaboration with the Soviet organization.

Oxford Virology was founded in 1986 and became best known for the work of Bishop and another consultant, Yong Kang, of the University of Ottawa, in developing recombinant strains of baculovirus both as insecticides and gene expression systems. Less publicized have been the company's activities in vaccine candidates and diagnostics for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, hemorrhagic fever, and the sheep disease, blue-tongue, as well as diagnostics for hepatitis B. OV-funded work at the Institute of Psychiatry (Denmark Hill) has led to the identification on 2-D protein gels of biochemical markers associated with Alzheimer's disease and with drug-responsiveness in schizophrenia, discoveries which the company hopes will attract pharmaceutical companies considering trials of Alzheimer's or schizophrenia therapeutics. To date, however, the company has generated little more than patent applications. Even sales of the

company's first product, a natural microbial insecticide, have been patchy.

Early last year, the U.K. firm became quoted on the now-defunct Third Market for junior companies, and raised over £2 million. But that money will run out in 1991, hence the importance of the Siberian connection. Million-dollar revenues from proprietary OV biological control products are still 3–5 years away, and NPO Vector's products target larger

markets—for controlling gypsy moth, cabbage moth, and, most importantly, the cotton boll-worm.

The NPO/OV pipeline is interesting to other U.K. companies, including Oxford Glycosystems (chemically produced oligosaccharides) and Oxford Molecular (software). More speculatively, OV has isolated a compound from licorice root, that has demonstrated *in vitro* antiviral activity.

—John Hodgson

If it's LC,

The YMC Catalog provides a comprehensive selection of high performance LC products, including several new chemistries available only from YMC:

- a new line of polymeric gels developed by Mitsubishi Kasei for bio-separations
- new chiral phases for polar to non-polar separations
- 20 different silica and polymer based bonded phases for maximum selectivity
- empty and packed columns from 1.0mm to 200mm diameter plus peripheral support accessories to keep your lab at peak efficiency.

For a copy, just call. For technical assistance, call toll free 800 YMC-6311.

it's in here.

YMC, Inc.

51 Gibraltar Drive
Morris Plains, NJ 07950
201 285-1776
Fax: 201 285-5389
Telex: 3719839 YMC IN UB



Circle No. 129 on Reader Service Card