BIOASTER Awarded Grant for the Development of Rapid Diagnostics for Neglected Tropical Diseases

BIOASTER receives $885K grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop Onchocerciasis advanced rapid diagnostic with Mologic Ltd

Lyon, January 7th, 2020

BIOASTER, the French Technology Research Institute for Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, today announced it has received a grant in the field of diagnosis of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The goal of the project is to develop advanced rapid diagnostics for Onchocerciasis, commonly known as “River Blindness”, one of the ten infections prioritised by the 2012 London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases and the World Health Organization for elimination by 2020.

Onchocerciasis is a debilitating disease caused by the parasitic worm Onchocerca volvulus transmitted to humans through exposure to repeated bites of infected blackflies mainly in sub-Saharan Africa where 26 million people are infected and 200 million people are at risk of contracting the disease. Currently, Onchocerciasis elimination programs rely primarily on Mass Drug Administration (MDA) of Ivermectin to eliminate transmission of O. volvulus, the causative agent of the disease. A field appropriate rapid diagnostic test with high enough performance to map onchocerciasis for elimination, and determine when countries can stop MDA, is urgently needed to eliminate transmission of this devastating disease in low-income countries.

The primary outcome of the $885k project is to develop and clinically evaluate a test prototype for the detection of O. volvulus antibodies in human blood with high specificity, through a strategic partnership with Mologic Ltd, a UK-based company developing high performance, next-generation lateral flow and rapid diagnostic technologies. BIOASTER will develop innovative recombinant antigens and engineered anti-IgG4 antibodies and will have access to Mologic’s high sensitivity lateral flow technology through the Company’s Centre for Advanced Rapid Diagnostics (CARD), which will allow for the deployment of an easy to use test at the point of need for the very first time, thus negating the requirement for laboratory tests.

“We are honored to become a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grantee for wet lab activities on such a key issue. We are proud to work on this ambitious collaborative project and to accelerate the emergence of new diagnostics solutions to fight against tropical infectious diseases. Researchers at BIOASTER are fully committed to delivering innovative results for the benefit of population and patients.” says Nathalie Garçon, CEO and CSO BIOASTER.

Dr Joe Fitchett, Medical Director, Mologic comments: “We are pleased to be working with BIOASTER on this important project and to apply our technology and expertise. Together, we will create a simple and sensitive rapid diagnostic for Onchocerciasis for use at the point of need. This will be the first of multiple projects in partnership with BIOASTER for epidemics and neglected diseases.”
About BIOASTER

Created in 2012, following the French initiative of Technological Research Institutes, BIOASTER is a non-for-profit foundation developing a unique technological and innovative model to support the latest challenges in microbiology. In particular, BIOASTER uses and develops high value technological innovations that accelerate development of medical solutions for populations and personalized medicine.

The aim of BIOASTER is to bring together academic, industry and its capacities and specific knowledge to develop and execute high impact collaborative projects requiring industry compatible innovative technologies.

Key figures:
- 4 fields of expertise: antimicrobials, diagnostics, microbiota, vaccines
- 2,450 m2 of BSL2 & BSL3 laboratories in Lyon and Paris;
- 100+ employees, including 80% of scientific experts and representing 17 nationalities;
- 66 collaborative projects, involving 26 private partners and 25 public partners.

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About MOLOGIC (www.mologic.co.uk)

Mologic is a leading developer of advanced lateral flow and rapid diagnostic technologies. Leveraging its core technology platforms, the Company works with global organisations, researchers and clinicians to help them deliver fast, reliable and accurate diagnosis at the point-of-care. Mologic’s founder, Professor Paul Davis, was the originator of the Clearblue pregnancy test that was launched in 1988 as the world’s first commercial application of lateral flow technology. The creativity, insight and knowledge that led to that ground-breaking invention has guided Mologic since its formation in 2003.

Mologic offers world-leading technology and scientific research expertise for contract research and development, alongside a portfolio of device and reagent products for clinical and commercial applications. The Company also helps organisations to scale-up manufacturing from initial prototyping through low to mid-scale production. Mologic’s science has broad application across markets and disease states where rapid, accurate point-of-care testing can help make a difference in patient care and patient outcomes.

Clients include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation where Mologic is leveraging core technology through its Centre for Advanced Rapid Diagnostics (CARD) to develop the next-generation of ultra-sensitive point-of-care diagnostics, which are easy to use and low cost to manufacture - critical to the success of many global health programs.

The Company is actively seeking strategic partners for its internal pipeline of respiratory, infection, infectious disease and women’s health diagnostics.

Mologic is headquartered in Bedford in the United Kingdom and has a US subsidiary in the greater Boston area, MA, USA.

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