



Current Agreements

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Collaborative R&D agreement for early discovery of new diseases

Roche

454 Life Sciences

Google

Jul 28 2009

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Companies:	Roche 454 Life Sciences Google
Announcement date:	Jul 28 2009

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Details

Announcement date:	Jul 28 2009
Industry sectors:	Bigpharma Bigbiotech Pharmaceutical Non-profit
Therapy areas:	Infectives
Technology types:	Discovery tools Software tools
Deal components:	Research
Stages of development:	Discovery

Financials

Termsheet

Joint project to demonstrate the feasibility of developing a multidisciplinary surveillance, research and response system.

This system will enhance the ability to predict and prevent emerging infectious diseases in East Africa.

Roche has donated a Genome Sequencer FLX system as backbone of this project.

Press Release

Roche and Google.org Start Initiative for Early Discovery of New Diseases BRANFORD, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Roche and Google.org recently started a joint project to demonstrate the feasibility of developing a multidisciplinary surveillance, research and response system. This system will enhance the ability to predict and prevent emerging infectious diseases in East Africa. Roche has donated a Genome Sequencer FLX system as backbone of this project. "We are proud to work with Google.org, and the dedicated research organizations in Kenya to bring this technology to a region of the world where novel viruses frequently emerge. We are confident that access to the 454 Sequencing Systems will improve monitoring of novel infectious diseases and enable faster discovery in case of an outbreak," said Chris McLeod, CEO of 454 Life Sciences, a member of the Roche Group.

The project will focus primarily on arboviruses (arthropod-borne viruses), a large group of viruses which frequently cause emergent disease and are transmitted by blood-sucking insects and their arthropod cousins, such as ticks. The first disease the project will tackle is Rift Valley Fever (RVF), a lethal disease of livestock and people caused by an arbovirus spread by mosquito vectors. The initiative will:

Survey human, livestock, wildlife and vector populations to monitor the circulation transmission and maintenance of arboviruses within them, with a focus on RVF virus
Employ state of the art genomics and knowledge management systems to advance understanding of the dynamics and diversity of disease-causing agents, their vectors and hosts and Link this wealth of new information to existing risk information and decision

support tools to provide early warning of disease outbreaks and enable rapid responses to control them. Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google.com, provided a US\$5-million grant to icipe (International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology) and partners late last year to enhance insect-carried disease discovery and surveillance of East Africa. In Nairobi, icipe, ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute), Kenya's national organizations for health (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Health and Kenya Medical Research Institute), livestock (Department of Veterinary Services and Kenya Agricultural Research Institute) and wildlife (Kenya Wildlife Services) have been chosen to participate in the project.

"We will be fortunate to have a GS FLX instrument initially donated to support the Arbovirus infection surveillance in Kenya, with plans to subsequently train and bring on board other research partners in East Africa. The East African region is known as one of the major hot beds for emergence of new infectious viral agents and new strains of known viruses. The region has also experienced large epidemics of arboviral diseases, such as Rift Valley Fever, Dengue and Yellow Fever just to mention a few. Surveillance to monitor circulation of such agents is critical in informing public health decision for early warning and response," says Christian Borgemeister, Director General of icipe.

Rosemary C. Sang, research scientist, added: "This new technology will play a very important role in promoting the capacity of surveillance and research groups in East Africa, to leap over constraints of currently available technologies and be able to discover infectious agents circulating unrecognized in our environment and monitor the evolutionary trends in the viral pathogens in order to remain current with the diagnostics and management options."

Emerging infectious diseases are a significant burden to our global economies and public health systems. Approximately 70% of emerging diseases are zoonotic, meaning that they are transmissible between humans and animals. Through the study of insects, icipe works to improve food production, human, animal, environmental health and natural resource conservation. In addition, it captures indigenous expertise, builds and strengthens local capacity. icipe conducts research and develops methods for pest control that are selective, non-polluting and not susceptible to resistance. The aim is to develop affordable, sustainable and conservation oriented solutions.

The Roche Genome Sequencer platform will be established within the Nairobi laboratories of ILRI and a regional joint venture called Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BecA). The ILRI-BecA Hub provides a biosciences research and bioinformatics platform linked to a network of laboratories distributed throughout Eastern and Central Africa, serving a new generation of African scientists.

The high-performance 454 Sequencing System has proven a powerful pathogen discovery tool in a series of recent novel virus outbreaks. In late 2008, for example, the system was used to discover a new zoonotic arena virus responsible for a highly fatal hemorrhagic fever outbreak in South Africa. Earlier that year, as reported in the New England Journal of Medicine, the system was used to identify a previously undetected virus responsible for the death of three transplant recipients in Australia.

About Roche

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world's leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As the world's biggest biotech company and an innovator of products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, the Group contributes on a broad range of fronts to improving people's health and quality of life. Roche is the world leader in in-vitro diagnostics and drugs for cancer and transplantation, and is a market leader in virology. It is also active in other major therapeutic areas such as autoimmune diseases, inflammatory and metabolic disorders and diseases of the central nervous system. In 2008 sales by the Pharmaceuticals Division totalled 36.0 billion Swiss francs, and the Diagnostics Division posted sales of 9.7 billion francs. Roche has R&D agreements and strategic alliances with numerous partners, including majority ownership interests in Genentech and Chugai, and invested nearly 9 billion Swiss francs in R&D in 2008. Worldwide, the Group employs about 80,000 people. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.roche.com.

Filing Data

Not available.

Contract

Not available.