

IN THE PIPELINE

Updates on Promising Agents in Development for Gastroenterology & Hepatology

Sandhill Scientific Acquired by Medovations

Sandhill Scientific, the US distributor of FibroScan, has been acquired by Medovations, a manufacturer of esophageal dilatation products. The addition of Sandhill Scientific, a pioneer of multichannel intraluminal impedance technology, which is now used as the gold standard for diagnosis of gastroesophageal reflux disease and dysphagia, will significantly expand Medovations' presence within the endoscopy market. Through its acquisition of Sandhill Scientific, Medovations will now be in a position to more comprehensively provide a range of diagnostic and therapeutic products for gastroenterologists and hepatologists.

"Leveraging combined resources and market expertise provides an opportunity to further innovate and develop our core business," said Stuart Wildhorn, vice president of sales and marketing for Sandhill Scientific, about the acquisition. Margaret Vierling, president of Medovations, noted that the acquisition supports Medovations' growth and diversification strategies. "There is remarkable synergy between the 2 organizations, which facilitates intercompany learning and the opportunity for accretive growth," she said.

Wako Life Sciences Receives Award for Pioneering Immunoanalyzer

Wako Life Sciences, Inc., has been bestowed the Outstanding Contribution to Clinical Chemistry in Science and Technology award by the Northern California Section of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry for the development of the μ TASWako i30 Immunoanalyzer. The μ TASWako i30 Immunoanalyzer has the distinction of being the first application of "lab-on-chip" technology in an in vitro diagnostic instrument. It is currently available in the United States and abroad for use in screening for serum lectin-reactive alpha-fetoprotein and

des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin in risk assessment of hepatocellular carcinoma.

The μ TASWako i30 was recognized as enabling cost-effective miniaturization and integration of key analyzer processes for the sampling, mixing, separation, and detection of serum biomarkers via a microfluidic chip. Using immunochemical and electrophoretic techniques, the system has been shown to provide rapid results that have a high degree of accuracy and sensitivity.

Takeda Advances in Therapeutics of Inflammatory Bowel Disease

This past January, a month after Takeda Pharmaceutical Company entered into an exclusive license and option agreement with Natrogen Therapeutic International, Inc., it launched 2 new phase 3 clinical trials of vedolizumab, an investigational treatment for moderate to severe inflammatory bowel disease.

In December 2013, Takeda acquired an exclusive license to develop Natrogen's Natura-alpha, a small molecule inhibitor of interleukin-1, interleukin-6, and tumor necrosis factor. Natura-alpha is currently in phase 2 development for the treatment of ulcerative colitis. Under the terms of the agreement between Takeda and Natrogen, Takeda obtained exclusive license for worldwide development of Natura-alpha in all indications and will fund and execute all additional clinical development of the compound. Takeda also had the option of wholly acquiring Natrogen.

Meanwhile, the new phase 3 trials of vedolizumab, a humanized monoclonal antibody that inhibits $\alpha 4\beta 7$ integrin function, are being conducted in Japan as placebo-controlled, randomized, double-blind, parallel-group studies. The trials will evaluate the efficacy, safety, and pharmacokinetics of vedolizumab for induction and maintenance therapy in the treatment of ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.