



Southern Biologics Network Established to Create Biologics Faster and Less Expensively

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. and BATON ROUGE, La. and RALEIGH, N.C. and RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C., Dec. 8, 2014 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Five biopharmaceutical research organizations with operations in Birmingham, Baton Rouge, Raleigh and Research Triangle Park have formed a new public-private partnership called the Southern Biologics Network (SBN) to create biologics faster and less expensively.

The five research organizations will work together to create advanced biologics for biopharmaceutical companies of all sizes.

Biologics are genetically engineered proteins from plant, animal and human cells. They'll be used to create therapeutics, vaccines, diagnostics and drug targets to treat and prevent diseases, assist in drug discovery, and improve the lives of tens of thousands of patients across the United States.

The five research organizations are:

Birmingham-based Southern Research Institute, which has created seven FDA-approved cancer drugs. Scientists there are discovering and developing treatments in multiple disease areas including oncology, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes and infectious diseases.

Pennington Biomedical Research Center at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge is at the forefront of medical discovery on understanding and combatting obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, dementia, and other chronic diseases with the goal of improving human health across the lifespan.

The Center for Structural Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is a leading structural biology research center providing scientists with biophysical and structural information on protein and protein/drug complexes.

ProteoVec, Inc., in Baton Rouge, Raleigh and RTP. PV's scientists develop and scale biologics production processes earlier in development, and more cost effectively, than previously possible.

Soluble Therapeutics, Inc., in Birmingham can determine optimized formulations that maximize solubility and stability for protein-based therapeutics in less than 60 days.

Biologics have revolutionized the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, multiple sclerosis and different types of cancers. Development of new biosimilar versions of existing breakthrough biologics are key to making healthcare more affordable and improving outcomes.

Pharmaceutical Companies Will Bring More Life-Saving Treatments to Market by Using SBN's Services

SBN is the first organization in the Southeastern United States to provide truly comprehensive biologic development services. Pharmaceutical companies will be able to save time and money because they'll be able to select one organization, SBN, instead of trying to coordinate the work of several biopharmaceutical research firms for the manufacture, discovery, preclinical development, and early-stage clinical development of biologics.

"More affordable production and more mature early-stage process development will lead to a greater number of breakthroughs making it to market," said ProteoVec CEO Michael Crapanzano, M.D. "Not only does that save time; that saves money, too."

That's a significant point of difference, considering the business risks and costs of drug development. According to the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, it can take up to 15 years to create an FDA-approved drug. Research and development costs can exceed \$1 billion, and only 20 percent of marketed drugs break even or turn a profit. Still, medicine can make a huge difference. Since 1980, 83 percent of life expectancy gains for cancer patients can be attributed to new treatments. The HIV/AIDS death rate has dropped more than 80 percent since the use of antiretroviral treatments in 1995.

"SBN combines some of the brightest minds in biologics, helps reduce the risk that pharmaceutical companies take at the earliest stages of biologics discovery and development, and allows our five entities to work together more efficiently with clients to do what we all do best — create biological therapeutics for our customers that will dramatically improve patients' lives," said Art Tipton, Ph.D., president and CEO of Southern Research Institute.

"We are excited to be part of this network, since we have many of the components necessary to quickly advance high value drug targets using our expertise in protein characterization, target validation, and the ability to optimize preclinical candidates for clients," explained Dr. Larry DeLucas, director of the Center for Structural Biology at UAB.

About the Southern Biologics Network

Southern Biologics Network service offerings include: initial characterization of protein structures and protein-drug interactions; protein expression, purification and formulation; preclinical in-vitro/in-vivo IND enabling studies; and Phase I clinical studies. SBN's customer service focus includes close consulting and assistance in the design and execution of all aspects of early-stage biologic development using cost effective, creative, and customized approaches. For more information, please visit <http://www.proteovec.com/southern-biologics-network/>