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ApoCell's Circulating Tumor Cell (CTC) Capture Technology First to Reliably Detect and Recover Deadly Liver Cancer Cells

Latest research data demonstrates CTC capture in hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) patients using revolutionary technology ApoStream™ that detects all types of circulating tumor cells (CTCs); accelerates potential for personalized therapy of liver cancer

HOUSTON (April 2, 2012) --- Scientists at ApoCell, Inc., in partnership with researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Massey Cancer Center, have used the company's revolutionary ApoStream™ technology for a new first ---the reliable isolation and recovery of circulating tumor cells (CTCs) from patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), one of the most common forms of liver cancer. Globally, liver cancer is the third most common cause of cancer-related deaths.

The research results were presented April 2 at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Annual Meeting 2012 in Chicago. This promising development could lead to detection of liver cancer at an early stage, currently not possible with available commercial detection methods. In addition, the ability to monitor CTC levels in a liver cancer patient's blood can improve the clinician's ability to gauge the effectiveness of drug therapies and support a more personalized approach to treatment.

In the ApoCell study, blood samples from HCC patients at VCU Massey Cancer Center were analyzed using ApoStream™ with compelling results. ApoStream™ recovered CTCs in all cancer patients, capturing hundreds of CTCs in some cases. This is the first time that this quantity of CTCs has been isolated from liver cancer patients.

Based on these findings, researchers believe that the highly sensitive ApoStream™ technology could detect liver cancer in patients earlier. Early detection is significant because HCC diagnosis is typically made at an advanced stage of the disease, when the cancer is especially aggressive and survival probability is low. If the disease is detected at an early stage, when patients are still candidates for targeted therapies, organ transplantation or other surgery, then the survival rate could increase substantially.

ApoStream™ is also being used for pharmacodynamic analysis in conjunction with an ongoing phase I trial conducted by VCU Massey Cancer Center to study the combination of the drugs sorafenib and vorinostat in patients with advanced HCC.

“These studies are significant because by analyzing the collected cells, we can monitor the patient’s response to treatment, view genetic changes within the cancer and obtain new insight into the diagnosis and evaluation of each patient’s unique disease,” said Dr. Andrew Poklepovic, an oncologist and researcher at VCU Massey Cancer Center and an assistant professor in the Division of Hematology, Oncology and Palliative Care at the VCU School of Medicine. “This technology opens the door to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of liver cancer.”

ApoStream™ recovers higher numbers and more types of CTCs because it relies on the unique properties of cancer cells, which are different in form and structure from healthy cells. ApoStream™ technology uses a low-level electrical field of varying frequencies to separate cancer cells from healthy ones based on their irregularities. The process is called dielectrophoresis field flow fractionation (DEP-FFF) and separation occurs as all cells from the patient’s blood sample flow through a special fluid chamber. ApoStream™ collects the cancer cells in a vial while non-cancerous cells are collected in a waste chamber.

ApoStream™ technology was invented by scientists at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center's Laboratory of Diagnostic Microsystems and licensed exclusively to ApoCell.

“ApoStream™ is truly revolutionary in the detection of circulating tumor cells for several reasons,” says Darren Davis, Ph.D, president and CEO of ApoCell. “First, it permits the isolation of cancer cells from all cancer types including lung, prostate, melanoma, breast, pancreatic, liver, glioblastoma and other rare forms. Secondly, the higher CTC isolation and capture capability provides greater opportunities for downstream analysis of the cancer cells, which has significant implications for treatment selection and assessing effectiveness.”

Davis added that ApoStream™ captures the cancer cells in a live and viable state for additional analytical testing.

ApoCell expects to deliver ApoStream™ alpha prototype units to the National Cancer Institute (NCI) later this year.

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About ApoCell, Inc.

Based in Houston, Texas, ApoCell, Inc. is a privately-held specialty clinical research company. Founded in 2004, the firm is a leader in molecular biomarker detection and analysis and leverages its expertise in the areas of oncology, diabetes, molecular diagnostics and drug development to measure biomarker signatures in clinical trial subjects. The company’s proprietary methods provide early proof of mechanism of action and monitor the effectiveness of various types of drugs by measuring biomarker expression patterns in biopsies, blood and rare cell types. The company’s facilities are CLIA-certified and compliant with applicable FDA regulations. Since inception, the company has participated in over 120 Phase I, II, and III clinical cancer drug trials for more than 80 sponsor clients worldwide. In 2011, the firm was named to the Inc. 5000 List of America’s Fastest Growing Companies. More information is available at apocell.com.