



Quest Diagnostics to Offer Virco's VirtualPhenotype(TM) Test To Predict Resistance to HIV Therapy

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BALTIMORE, and TETERBORO, N.J., Jan. 9 /PRNewswire/ -- Virco, an international biotechnology group and pioneer in HIV pharmacogenomics and Quest Diagnostics Incorporated (NYSE: DGX), the leading provider of diagnostic laboratory testing, information and services in the United States, today announced an agreement under which Quest Diagnostics will offer Virco's VirtualPhenotype(TM) test to predict resistance to antiviral drugs used to treat HIV. Physicians use the test to help them select the most effective drugs for each patient.

Despite the use of highly active combination therapy, many HIV/AIDS patients experience treatment failure due to HIV developing resistance to the drugs used against it. Resistance testing helps clinicians select the most effective combination of drugs for the individual patient and improve their response to treatment.

"We are very pleased to enhance our HIV genotyping portfolio with Virco's VirtualPhenotype(TM) test, which we believe is the only proven virtual phenotyping test available for predicting HIV drug resistance from genetic information," said Jorge Leon, Ph.D., Vice President, Applied Genomics for Quest Diagnostics. "Virco's VirtualPhenotype(TM) test is the only quantitative, proven approach on the market today for virtual phenotyping and is based on the world's largest database of HIV genotypes and phenotypes."

Quest Diagnostics will also distribute other resistance monitoring Services Provided by Virco. These include state-of-the art molecular and genetic techniques to detect individual changes in the genetic code of HIV from individual patients (genotyping) and direct measurement of the susceptibility of the virus to all the available HIV drugs (phenotyping).

Virco's VirtualPhenotype(TM) test combines the speed and genetic detail of genotyping with the predictive power of phenotyping. The VirtualPhenotype(TM) test reads the genetic code of the patient's virus, interrogates Virco's database of approximately 100,000 genotypes and phenotypes for samples with the same mutations, and calculates a highly accurate prediction of which drugs will be active against the virus and which will not.

"As the nation's largest provider of diagnostic testing, information and services, Quest Diagnostics has the potential to greatly expand the distribution of this important test, improving the health of people living with HIV/AIDS in the USA," commented Wim Swyzen, MD, Regional Managing Director, Virco USA & Canada. "We hope that this will have a substantial positive impact on the treatment outcome for people living with this challenging condition."

Virco Background

Virco is widely regarded as a world leader in HIV resistance testing and has developed and commercialized some of the most widely available and trusted test methodologies in the world. It is the only company to provide genotyping, phenotyping and the VirtualPhenotype(TM), all conducted in its stringently quality controlled and fully accredited laboratories around the world.

Virco is a multinational biotechnology company with operating subsidiaries in the United States, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Virco, with U.S. operations based in Baltimore, Md., applies the most advanced technologies in molecular biology, automation, ultra high-throughput screening and electronic data processing to the diagnosis and management of HIV, other infectious diseases and cancer. For further information, please visit Virco's website at: <http://www.vircolab.com>.

Quest Diagnostics Background

Quest Diagnostics, a leader in gene-based testing, co-developed HIV resistance testing with Dr. Thomas C. Merigan's team at Stanford University in 1997 and became the first national reference laboratory to offer the test. Quest Diagnostics' gene-based testing focuses on infectious disease, oncology and hereditary conditions, and helps physicians target individual treatment regimes, monitor resistance to therapies and predict predisposition to various genetic conditions. Quest Diagnostics is a leading innovator in genomics testing, both through its research and development center and esoteric testing laboratory, the world-renowned Nichols Institute, as well as through alliances with leading academic and commercial researchers.

Based in Teterboro, N.J., Quest Diagnostics is the nation's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services with annualized revenues of more than \$3 billion. The testing performed on human specimens helps doctors diagnose, treat and monitor disease; enables employers to detect workplace drug abuse; and supports pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies in clinical trials of new therapeutics worldwide. Quest Informatics analyzes laboratory and other medical data to help health care providers improve the care of patients. Additional company information can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.questdiagnostics.com>. SOURCE Virco and Quest Diagnostics Incorporated

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