



Quest Diagnostics Invests in Structural Bioinformatics, A Leader in Computational Proteomics and Structural Pharmacogenomics

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TETERBORO, N.J. and SAN DIEGO, Dec. 14 /PRNewswire/ -- Quest Diagnostics Incorporated (NYSE: DGX), the nation's leading provider of gene-based medical testing, information and services, announced today that it has made an equity investment in Structural Bioinformatics, Inc. (SBI), a privately held technology leader in computational proteomics -- the large-scale generation and use of protein structure and protein structural information. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

In July 1999, Quest Diagnostics and SBI announced a strategic alliance to jointly develop a series of database modules of novel, structurally variant proteins and market these products directly to the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry for use in developing new therapeutic compounds. Marketed under the Variome trademark, the database modules contain thousands of structurally variant forms of viral proteins. The data is derived from viral genotypes taken from patient specimens that have been analyzed by Quest Diagnostics. To protect the confidentiality of patient records, all data in the Variome(TM) database modules has been stripped of clinical information, rendering it anonymous.

Information contained in the database modules is essential to understanding differences in interactions between a drug, or a potential drug compound, and various structural mutations of the intended drug target. The database provides a means to understanding patient-to-patient differences in drug activity based on differences in drug target structures at a molecular level. This knowledge is useful in drug design as well as the selection of optimal drug candidates for initiation of human trials.

Current drug target-specific Variome(TM) database modules consist of more than 25,000 unique structures of two HIV-1 proteins -- reverse transcriptase and protease. These modules depict three-dimensional computer representations of well-characterized structures to derive drug-target interactions through computational docking.

"SBI is a technology leader in the large-scale computational generation of protein structures and leads the field in protein-structure database management systems and structural data mining tools," said Jorge Leon, Ph.D., Vice President, Applied Genomics, for Quest Diagnostics. "As the leader in gene-based testing, Quest Diagnostics has accumulated a large database of viral mutations. Together, we can bring to bear advances in information technology to drive advances in patient care."

SBI also provides software tools to make the database easy to access. The Variome(TM) interface provides a growing number of built-in query tools and is SQL-compatible for user-directed complex queries. The large sample size provides a representative spectrum of HIV mutations for meaningful statistics and provides temporal and geographic trend data for changes in mutational patterns over a period of nearly three years. Sampling is current and ongoing with the addition of approximately 1,000 sequences/structures per month by Quest Diagnostics' Nichols Institute.

"Our scientific and business partnership with Quest Diagnostics has yielded significant advances in the field of structural pharmacogenomics," said Dr. Edward T. Maggio, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of SBI. "We are extremely pleased at the steady growth of this relationship, which has been driven by natural synergies between SBI's computational technologies and Quest Diagnostics' undisputed technical excellence and market leadership in clinical and medical informatics."

About Quest Diagnostics

Quest Diagnostics is the nation's leading provider of gene-based medical testing, information and services, with a focus on infectious disease, oncology and hereditary conditions. Quest Diagnostics' gene-based tools help physicians target individual treatment regimes, monitor resistance to therapies and predict susceptibility to hereditary conditions. Quest Diagnostics is a leading innovator in genomics testing, both through its research and development center, the world-renowned Nichols Institute, as well as alliances with leading academic and commercial technology developers.

With annualized revenues of more than \$3 billion, Quest Diagnostics is the nation's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services. 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>.

About Structural Bioinformatics

SBI is a world leader in computational proteomics -- the large-scale generation and use of protein structure and protein structural information. The Company has developed advanced technologies to generate highly refined 3-dimensional structural models of proteins from primary genetic information and commercializes these technologies through its structural database products and through drug discovery collaborations with leading pharmaceutical companies. SBI has offices and research facilities in San Diego, CA; Cambridge, MA and Horsholm, Denmark. More information about SBI can be found on the company's website at: <http://www.strubix.com> SOURCE Quest Diagnostics Incorporated

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