

DiaTech Oncology

Patient Specific Cancer Testing

Press Release

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Vanderbilt University Licenses Cancer Cell Identifying Technology to DiaTech Oncology

Nashville, Tenn. March 2009– Vanderbilt University announced today an exclusive license agreement with DiaTech Oncology, Brentwood, Tenn., for a cancer test called the Microkinetic assay (MiCK). The MiCK assay, invented at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, is a proprietary laboratory test to help physicians determine specific chemotherapy needs for patients by measuring the response of the patient's own cancer cells to an array of different chemotherapeutic drugs.

“Cancer patients often receive a whole suite or cocktail of chemotherapy agents because it's not known at the outset what drug or drug combination will be most effective to treat any one patient,” said Chris McKinney, director, Vanderbilt University Office of Technology Transfer and Enterprise Development. “This test could help oncologists decide which drug could be most efficacious, possibly reducing risk to the patient and the expense of the treatment.” It has long been known that chemotherapy drugs used to treat cancer will cause cancer cells that are sensitive to those drugs to undergo a process of self-destruction called apoptosis. Measuring the amount of drug-induced apoptosis in a patient's tumor cells in the lab prior to the drug treatment in the patient helps doctors to select drugs to which tumor cells of the patient are sensitive and thus, to increase the success rate of the patient's cancer chemotherapy. In the MiCK test, the tumor cells of an individual patient are exposed to multiple therapeutic doses of several chemotherapeutic drugs. A sophisticated lab analysis of the cancer cells is used to monitor and compute the amounts of apoptosis caused by each of the drugs to establish a drug sensitivity profile of the patient's tumor cells. Knowledge of a patient's drug sensitivity profile may allow the treating oncologists to prescribe chemotherapy that is effective against the tumor cells of that patient. This may help the patient to receive the drugs likely to produce a remission, enhancing the likelihood of a cure, and may avoid unnecessary toxicity or side effects.

The MiCK test may also reduce the cost of patients' treatments by avoiding drugs that are unlikely to work or by indicating when generic drugs are as likely to work as more expensive alternatives. “DiaTech is the only laboratory offering automated kinetic measuring of apoptosis for clinical testing and direct determination of a patient's actual sensitivity to a chemotherapeutic agent,” said R. Garry Latimer, CEO of DiaTech Oncology. “Currently, oncologists everywhere use an empirical approach to the selection of a patient's treatment – the selection of a drug is based on statistical data obtained in large clinical studies, and not on the patient's own cancer profile of drug sensitivity. The MiCK assay is an important new tool for the practice of personalized medicine.” When a cancer patient's specimen is submitted for the MiCK drug sensitivity study, the referring oncologist receives a clinically important drug sensitivity profile for the tumor cells of the individual cancer patient from the DiaTech Oncology laboratory within 48 to 72 hours. Even in those patients who have advanced cancers that have become resistant due to multiple prior treatments, the MiCK test may help doctors choose a drug treatment that is still able to treat a patient's tumor. (<http://diatech-oncology.com>)