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## **Astex Pharmaceuticals, Cancer Research Technology and Newcastle University Sign Strategic Drug Discovery Alliance**

DUBLIN, Calif. and CAMBRIDGE, U.K., Oct. 29, 2012 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Astex Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (Nasdaq:ASTX), a pharmaceutical company dedicated to the discovery and development of novel small molecule therapeutics, Cancer Research Technology Limited (CRT) and Newcastle University have signed a major five-year strategic drug discovery alliance. The partners will discover and develop new cancer drugs in collaboration with researchers at the Cancer Research UK Drug Discovery Program at the Northern Institute for Cancer Research (NICR, Newcastle University).

During the five-year alliance, Astex will provide £1M funding annually to Newcastle University to support research across biology, chemistry, pharmacology and imaging at the NICR to identify and develop new cancer drugs and associated biomarkers to develop tests to determine which patients to treat and if new drugs are working.

Harren Jhoti, PhD, president and director of Astex Pharmaceuticals, said, "We are delighted to enter into this broad strategic drug discovery alliance with one of Cancer Research UK's leading drug discovery centers as it allows Astex to access world-leading translational research in oncology."

"This new alliance builds on a previous collaboration between Astex, Newcastle and CRT on FGFr, a key cancer target, which led to the development of a clinical candidate that our partners at Janssen have recently taken into a Phase I clinical trial, and we look forward to discovering more new potential therapies for cancer patients."

Astex will retain an option to an exclusive worldwide license to develop and commercialize pharmaceutical products from each alliance project. CRT and Newcastle are eligible to receive development and regulatory milestone payments on exercise of the options, and on products that Astex takes into development (and royalties on sales of products). Financial terms of the milestone payments and royalties were not disclosed.

Professor Herbie Newell, co-director of the Cancer Research UK Drug Discovery Program at the NICR, Newcastle University, said, "This exciting alliance represents an innovative route to the development of more effective cancer drugs by combining the partners' expertise and experience."

"The research will bring together pre-clinical drug and biomarker discovery approaches using molecular, genetic and clinical data to identify new targets in cancer cells that can be treated with drugs, and ultimately medicines to take into clinical trials that will provide new ways to treat the disease and increase survival."

Dr Keith Blundy, Cancer Research Technology's chief executive, said, "This major collaboration, which builds on the successes and impressive track record of all partners, will further develop Cancer Research UK's world-class research into cancer treatments."

"Risk-sharing partnerships like this enable us to maximize the development of our basic research portfolio into new treatments for patients."

"The success of our existing network of partnerships is seen in our drug development pipeline which is the largest and most diverse of any academic partner worldwide with more than 30 cancer therapies in clinical development, and a further 175 discovery/pre-clinical projects in our portfolio, of which 55 are partnered with industry."

### **About Astex Pharmaceuticals**

Astex Pharmaceuticals is dedicated to the discovery and development of novel small molecule therapeutics with a focus on oncology. The Company is developing a proprietary pipeline of novel therapies and is creating de-risked products for partnership with leading pharmaceutical companies. Astex Pharmaceuticals developed Dacogen® (decitabine) for Injection and receives significant royalties on global sales.

For more information about Astex Pharmaceuticals, Inc., please visit <http://www.astx.com>.

The Astex Pharmaceuticals, Inc. logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=12273>

## Background to the alliance

The new alliance builds on the success of an earlier collaboration between the parties to develop small molecule inhibitors of the Fibroblast Growth Factor Receptor (FGFr) tyrosine kinase - potential medicines to block a key protein involved in cancer development. This partnership led to the discovery and development of a clinical candidate — potential drug molecule — which was recently taken into a Phase I clinical trial by Astex's partner Janssen Pharmaceutica N.V.

The complementary expertise and resources of NICR in cancer biology, biomarker imaging and target validation (proving a target in a cancer cell can be modulated with drugs) and its proven track record in drug discovery, together with Astex's fragment-based drug discovery approach provides an outstanding opportunity for collaboration.

Astex has identified the strategic value of establishing alliances with leading academic institutes to provide complementary academic drug discovery expertise and capabilities to identify new drug targets in cancer cells and validation — proving the effectiveness of hitting these targets with drugs - in order to continue to support a portfolio of projects to identify novel targeted drugs. This can be achieved on a target-by-target basis, but the potential to have a broader strategic collaboration to review and assess multiple targets across a portfolio of projects and on a longer term basis is very attractive.

The Cancer Research UK Drug Discovery Program at the NICR has a formidable track-record in anticancer drug discovery and development, making significant contributions in particular to the discovery of the first-in-class and first-in-cancer patient medicine called a PARP inhibitor, rucaparib. NICR was responsible for target identification and validation (proving it is an effective target), hit and lead discovery (selecting potential drug molecules to hit the molecular target), lead optimization to develop the drug molecules using structure-based drug design, and pivotal laboratory studies in human tumor models. Newcastle also carried out pre-clinical development and validation of proof-of-mechanism and proof-of-concept biomarkers through to leading Phase I and II clinical trials of rucaparib. This included extensive associated translational research, both with the drug alone and also in combination with temozolomide in women with breast or ovarian cancer. Furthermore, NICR researchers have made major contributions to the clinical development of imatinib for the treatment of CML and pemetrexed for the management of mesothelioma.

Astex's productive fragment based drug discovery approach has resulted in a clinical pipeline which currently includes eight drugs in development; four proprietary products, three of which are in Phase II trials at Astex with one in preclinical development and three further candidates being tested in clinical trials by Astex's partners Novartis, AstraZeneca and Janssen with one other preclinical candidate expected to be in the clinic in 2012.

## About Newcastle University

- Newcastle University is a [Russell Group University](#)
- The university ranks in the top 20 of UK universities in The Sunday Times 2013 University Guide
- Amongst its peers Newcastle is:

--10th in the UK for student satisfaction

--In the UK's top 12 for research power in Science and Engineering

- 93% of Newcastle students are in a job or further training within six months of graduating (HEFCE 2012)
- The university has a world-class reputation for research excellence and are spearheading three major [challenges](#) that have a significant impact on global society. These themes are: Ageing and Health, Sustainability, and Social Renewal
- Newcastle University is the first UK university to establish a fully owned international branch campus for medicine at its [NUMed Campus in Malaysia](#) which opened in 2011
- Newcastle's international students put the university in the world's top 12 ([ISB 2011](#))

## About Cancer Research Technology

Cancer Research Technology (CRT) is a specialist commercialization and development company, which aims to develop new discoveries in cancer research for the benefit of cancer patients. CRT works closely with leading international cancer scientists and their institutes to protect intellectual property arising from their research and to establish links with commercial partners. CRT facilitates the discovery, development and marketing of new cancer therapeutics, vaccines, diagnostics and enabling technologies. CRT is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cancer Research UK, the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. Further information about CRT can be found at [www.cancertechnology.com](http://www.cancertechnology.com)

## About Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research.
- The charity's groundbreaking work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives. This work is funded entirely by the public.
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival rates in the UK double in the last forty years.
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.
- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.

For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 0300 123 1861 or visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org).

CONTACT: Timothy L. Enns

Astex Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

Senior Vice President

Corporate Communications & Marketing

Tel: +1 (925) 560-2810

E-mail: [tim.enns@astx.com](mailto:tim.enns@astx.com)

Astex Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

Manager

Investor Relations

Tel: +1 (925) 560-2845

E-mail: [susanna.chau@astx.com](mailto:susanna.chau@astx.com)

Alan Roemer

The Trout Group

Managing Director

Tel: +1 (646) 378-2945

E-mail: [aroemer@troutgroup.com](mailto:aroemer@troutgroup.com)

Kari Watson

MacDougall Biomedical Communications

Senior Vice President

Tel: +1 (781) 235-3060

E-mail: [kwatson@macbiocom.com](mailto:kwatson@macbiocom.com)



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