Lilly and Medtronic Announce Drug-Device Collaboration for Parkinson's Disease

Collaboration combines companies' expertise in neuroscience and targeted drug delivery

INDIANAPOLIS and MINNEAPOLIS, April 26, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Eli Lilly and Company (NYSE: LLY) and Medtronic, Inc. (NYSE: MDT) today announced they have entered into a collaboration to research and develop a new approach to treating Parkinson's disease that involves delivering a potential new medicine to the brain using an implantable drug delivery system. The goal of the collaboration is to develop a therapeutic approach for Parkinson's disease that combines the strengths of Lilly’s biologic, a modified form of glial cell derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF), with Medtronic's implantable drug infusion system technology.

"We believe we have biosynthetically engineered this GDNF variant to overcome technical hurdles of previous research in this area and are hopeful that early testing of our biologic with Medtronic's device will provide the necessary data to safely advance into human studies," said Michael L. Hutton, Ph.D., chief scientific officer of the neurodegeneration team at Lilly. "By collaborating with Medtronic from the earliest phase of research, we are maximizing the potential for this therapy's efficient and effective development."

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative condition caused by progressive loss of neurons in the brain that produce dopamine, a chemical messenger responsible for transmitting signals that allow for coordination of movement. As a result, patients with Parkinson's disease experience balance problems, tremors and muscular stiffness, among other symptoms which worsen over time. It is estimated that 7 million to 10 million people worldwide are living with Parkinson's disease(i) and there is no cure. Around the world, April is Parkinson's Awareness Month.

Applying its expertise in biotechnology, Lilly has designed its GDNF variant with the intent to achieve increased distribution in targeted brain regions. Medtronic has developed a drug pump and specially designed catheter to enable precise delivery of the GDNF variant into a targeted area of the brain consistently over time. This combination of a novel GDNF variant, paired with an optimized delivery system, has the potential to impact the neurodegeneration that leads to worsening symptoms and progression of Parkinson's disease.

"Our collaboration with Lilly is bringing together the expertise of both companies to develop a new approach to the treatment of Parkinson's disease," said Steve Oesterle, M.D., senior vice president of Medicine and Technology at Medtronic. "One of the most significant challenges in delivering a biologic treatment for neurodegenerative diseases is crossing the blood brain barrier. We have extensive experience in targeted drug delivery and technology that allow delivery of therapeutic agents directly to the brain."

"While a potential treatment approach resulting from this research is many years away, we are heartened by Lilly and Medtronic's commitment to develop a neurotrophic-based therapy for Parkinson's disease," said Katie Hood, CEO of The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. "Our foundation has funded separate, ongoing work in neurotrophic factors for years, and we continue to believe in their promise to lead to a critically needed disease-modifying treatment for Parkinson's."

About Eli Lilly and Company

Lilly, a leading innovation-driven corporation, is developing a growing portfolio of pharmaceutical products by applying the latest research from its own worldwide laboratories and from collaborations with eminent scientific organizations. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind., Lilly provides answers — through medicines and information — for some of the world's most urgent medical needs. Additional information about Lilly is available at www.lilly.com.

About Medtronic

Medtronic, Inc. (www.medtronic.com), headquartered in Minneapolis, is the global leader in medical technology — alleviating pain, restoring health, and extending life for millions of people around the world.

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Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Such statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the managements of Lilly and Medtronic, and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. Actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements. The companies undertake no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause their results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in their most recent Forms 10-K and 10-Q, and each company’s other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC’s Internet site (www.sec.gov).


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