

Basel, 3 June 1998

MabThera® receives marketing authorization in the European Union

MabThera (rituximab), the first monoclonal antibody for the treatment of patients suffering from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, has received marketing authorization from the European Commission. This ground-breaking new treatment, made possible with the help of biotechnology, will be available first to patients in the UK and Germany within two weeks. Launch in other member states of the European Union will follow soon thereafter.

MabThera has already been on the market in Switzerland and the United States since December 1997. In the United States, the drug is been co-promoted by IDEC Pharmaceuticals Corporation and Genentech Inc. under the trade name Rituxan™ for the treatment of relapsed or refractory low-grade or follicular, CD20-positive B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

MabThera is administered on an outpatient basis. Four infusions are given one week apart. This contrasts with current clinical practice where chemotherapy is administered over a four to six month period.

Clinical Data presented to the regulatory authorities showed that MabThera, when used alone, induced tumor responses in 58 percent of patients suffering from relapsed or chemoresistant follicular B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

MabThera was discovered by IDEC Pharmaceuticals Corporation and was jointly developed by IDEC, Genentech, Inc., F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd of Switzerland and Zenyaku Kogyo Co. Ltd of Japan. Roche has marketing rights to MabThera outside of the United States and Japan.

In Europe alone, there are approximately 140,000 patients with B-cell Non-Hodgkin's lymphomas, which are malignancies of the body's antibody-producing immune cells. Approximately 40% are follicular lymphoma patients who will experience multiple relapses during the average seven-year course of their incurable disease. Currently, standards of treatment consist of chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy, with their accompanying toxicity.