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Roche and deCODE genetics Announce Milestone in Alzheimer's Research

Roche and deCODE genetics (Nasdaq/Easdaq:DCGN), based in Reykjavik, Iceland, announced today that scientists at deCODE have successfully mapped a novel gene that contributes to the occurrence of the common form of Alzheimer's disease (often referred to as late-onset Alzheimer's).

The location of the gene linked to Alzheimer's disease within a narrow chromosomal region was achieved through a study focusing on Alzheimer's disease as a public health problem involving 1,100 participating Icelandic patients and their unaffected relatives. This finding underscores the role of genetics in the pathogenesis of this devastating illness, and represents a critical milestone on the way to identifying a gene and its disease-linked variants.

Roche plans to initiate discovery and development programs for new diagnostics and therapeutics building on this genetic information. deCODE genetics has received an undisclosed milestone payment from Roche for this accomplishment.

Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia in the elderly, affects about 5% of people over the age of 65. Due to the continuing rise in life expectancy, the disease and its associated burden of suffering among individuals and their families and its costs to society are becoming ever more significant public health problems. Although progress has been made during the past decade in the diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, there is still no cure.

Kari Stefansson, CEO of deCODE genetics noted that, "We have made significant progress towards finding a novel gene that, depending on the presence of certain molecular variations, contributes to the common form of Alzheimer's disease. This work underscores the feasibility and power of studying common complex diseases using Iceland's unique resources."

Jonathan Knowles, Head of Global Research at Roche added, "We are very impressed by the rapid progress made by deCODE genetics towards identifying genes that play important roles in the molecular pathology of common diseases. "

In March 2000, Roche announced that deCODE scientists had mapped a gene linked to stroke. Last year, the two companies announced the identification of a narrow chromosomal region carrying a gene that contributes to osteoarthritis.

deCODE genetics (www.decode.com) is conducting research into the inherited causes of common diseases. Through its population-based approach and data-mining techniques, deCODE seeks to turn raw genomics data into products and services for the healthcare industry.

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world's leading research-oriented healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals, diagnostics and vitamins. Roche's innovative products and services address prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases, thus enhancing people's well-being and quality of life.