



Athersys Receives U.S. Patent Covering Adult Stem Cell Composition & Production

Athersys Also Granted European Patent for Non-Embryonic, Pluripotent Stem Cells

CLEVELAND, Feb 10, 2010 (GlobeNewswire via COMTEX News Network) -- Athersys, Inc. (Nasdaq:ATHX) announced today that it has been granted U.S. patent 7,659,118 that covers non-embryonic multipotent stem cells, their isolation and expansion, and related pharmaceutical compositions. Athersys also announced that it has been granted -- and the opposition period has cleared -- EP patent EP1218489B1 that covers non-embryonic pluripotent stem cells, their isolation, expansion, and usage.

The issued patents cover Athersys' proprietary scalable MultiStem(R) technology, which is an investigational stem cell therapy that has demonstrated therapeutic potential to treat a broad range of diseases and indications, including acute myocardial infarction, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), bone marrow transplant support and ischemic stroke. Athersys announced in December 2009 a strategic partnership with Pfizer under which the companies will jointly develop MultiStem for IBD.

"These patents further expand our stem cell IP estate and offer additional validation of the strength and breadth of the Athersys IP portfolio," said William (B.J.) Lehmann, President and COO of Athersys. "We believe that these patents are especially important as they extend the coverage of the composition, isolation, differentiation and scalable manufacturing of non-embryonic stem cells that are core to our technology and product portfolio."

Both patents form part of Athersys' broad intellectual property (IP) portfolio of 14 granted patents and more than 120 global patent applications around its stem cell technology and MultiStem product platform. The current IP estate, which incorporates additional filings and may broaden over time, could provide coverage for Athersys' cell compositions, methods of use, manufacturing processes, and product candidates through as late as 2028.

About MultiStem

MultiStem is a patented and proprietary cell therapy product consisting of a special class of stem cell that is obtained from bone marrow or other tissue sources of healthy, consenting adult donors, and which has the demonstrated ability to produce a range of factors and form multiple cell types. MultiStem appears to promote tissue repair and healing in multiple ways, such as through the production of multiple therapeutic factors produced in response to signals of inflammation and tissue damage. Athersys believes that MultiStem represents a unique "off-the-shelf" stem cell product. This belief is based on work that demonstrates the ability of MultiStem to deliver multiple mechanisms of therapeutic benefit, to be administered without tissue matching or immunosuppression, and to be produced on a large-scale. Athersys has forged strategic partnerships with Pfizer to develop MultiStem for IBD and with Angiotech to develop MultiStem in acute myocardial infarction and other cardiovascular indications. In 2008, Athersys was awarded the Frost & Sullivan North American Product Innovation of the Year Award for MultiStem, which cited the product as having best-in-class potential among stem cell and regenerative medicine technologies.

About Athersys

Athersys is a clinical stage biopharmaceutical company engaged in the discovery and development of therapeutic product candidates designed to extend and enhance the quality of human life. The Company is developing MultiStem(R), a patented, adult-derived "off-the-shelf" stem cell product platform for multiple disease indications, including damage caused by myocardial infarction, bone marrow transplantation and oncology treatment support, ischemic stroke, and inflammatory bowel disease. The Company is also developing a portfolio of other therapeutic programs, including orally active pharmaceutical product candidates for the treatment of metabolic and central nervous system disorders, utilizing proprietary technologies, including Random Activation of Gene Expression (RAGE(R)). Athersys has forged several key strategic alliances and collaborations with leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, as well as world-renowned research institutions in the United States and Europe to further develop its platform and products.

The Athersys, Inc. logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=4548>

Forward Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 that involve risks and uncertainties. These forward-looking statements relate to, among other things, the expected timetable for development of our product candidates, our growth strategy, and our future financial performance, including our operations, economic performance, financial condition, prospects, and other future events. We have attempted to identify forward-looking statements by using such words as "anticipates," "believes," "can," "continue," "could," "estimates," "expects," "intends," "may," "plans," "potential," "should," "will," or other similar expressions. These forward-looking statements are only predictions and are largely based on our current expectations. A number of known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors could affect the accuracy of these statements. Some of the more significant known risks that we face that could cause actual results to differ materially from those implied by forward-looking statements are the risks and uncertainties inherent in the process of discovering, developing, and commercializing products that are safe and effective for use as human therapeutics, such as the uncertainty regarding market acceptance of our product candidates and our ability to generate revenues, including MultiStem for the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease, acute myocardial infarction and other disease indications. These risks may cause our actual results, levels of activity, performance, or achievements to differ materially from any future results, levels of activity, performance, or achievements expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements. Other important factors to consider in evaluating our forward-looking statements include: the possibility of delays in, adverse results of, and excessive costs of the development process; changes in external market factors; changes in our industry's overall performance; changes in our business strategy; our ability to protect our intellectual property portfolio; our possible inability to realize commercially valuable discoveries in our collaborations with pharmaceutical and other biotechnology companies; our possible inability to execute our strategy due to changes in our industry or the economy generally; changes in productivity and reliability of suppliers; and the success of our competitors and the emergence of new competitors. You should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements contained in this press release, and we undertake no obligation to publicly update forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

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