



June 27, 2016

Athersys Joins Russell 3000® Index

CLEVELAND, June 27, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Athersys, Inc. (Nasdaq:ATHX) announced today that it has joined the broad-market Russell 3000® Index as of the conclusion of the Russell U.S. Indices annual reconstitution, which became effective after the U.S. market opened on June 27, 2016. The preliminary list of additions was posted by FTSE Russell earlier this month.

Annual reconstitution of the Russell U.S. indices captures the 4,000 largest U.S. stocks as of the end of May 2016, ranking them by total market capitalization. Membership in the U.S. all-cap Russell 3000® Index, which remains in place for one year, means automatic inclusion in the large-cap Russell 1000® Index or small-cap Russell 2000® Index, as well as the appropriate growth and value style indices. FTSE Russell determines membership for its Russell indices by objective, market-capitalization rankings and style attributes.

"We are pleased to be included in the Russell 3000 and Russell 2000 Indices, as it represents an important milestone that should translate to even greater institutional ownership and awareness among funds that benchmark against them," commented Gil Van Bokkelen, Chairman & CEO of Athersys. "This should also provide benefits to our shareholders in terms of increased liquidity and greater visibility among these types of institutional funds. Furthermore, it reflects the important progress we are making in multiple areas, as we continue working toward our goals of developing safe and effective new medicines for patients suffering from a stroke or experiencing other areas of substantial unmet medical need, and becoming a leading biopharmaceutical company."

"Working with our partner, HEALIOS K.K., we continue to make good progress on preparing the submission of the J-IND for the upcoming stroke clinical trial in Japan, and as we have described previously, we expect to initiate the trial later this year," commented Dr. Van Bokkelen. "The new regulatory framework in Japan allows for either Conditional Approval or Full Approval of appropriately qualified regenerative medicine therapies that demonstrate both safety and efficacy upon the completion of the study, and fulfill the other rigorous regulatory requirements implemented by PMDA. Furthermore, in addition to our ongoing activities in Japan, we have also had very productive discussions with the FDA about the potential development path for the stroke program and will continue to work with regulators to finalize our approach."

Indices provided by FTSE Russell, a leading global index provider, are widely used by investment managers and institutional investors for index funds and as benchmarks for active investment strategies. Approximately \$6 trillion in assets are benchmarked against the Russell U.S. indices.

For more information on the Russell 3000® Index and the Russell U.S. Indices reconstitution, go to the "Russell Reconstitution" section on the FTSE Russell website.

About Athersys

Athersys is an international biotechnology 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 its MultiStem® cell therapy product, a patented, adult-derived "off-the-shelf" stem cell product, initially for disease indications in the cardiovascular, neurological, inflammatory and immune disease areas, and has several ongoing clinical trials evaluating this potential regenerative medicine product. Athersys has forged strategic partnerships and collaborations with leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, as well as world-renowned research institutions to further develop its platform and products. More information is available at www.athersys.com.

About FTSE Russell

FTSE Russell is a global index leader and data provider that provides innovative benchmarking, analytics and data solutions for investors worldwide. FTSE Russell calculates thousands of indices that measure and benchmark markets and

asset classes in more than 70 countries, covering 98% of the investable market, globally.

FTSE Russell index expertise and products are used extensively by institutional and retail investors, globally. Approximately \$10 trillion is currently benchmarked to FTSE Russell indices. For over 30 years, leading asset owners, asset managers, ETF providers and investment banks have chosen FTSE Russell indices to benchmark their investment performance and create ETFs, structured products and index-based derivatives.

A core set of universal principles guides FTSE Russell index design and management: a transparent rules-based methodology is informed by independent committees of leading market participants. FTSE Russell is focused on applying the highest industry standards in index design and governance, and embraces the IOSCO principles. FTSE Russell is also focused on index innovation and client collaboration as it seeks to enhance the breadth, depth and reach of its offering.

FTSE Russell is wholly-owned by London Stock Exchange Group. For more information, visit www.ftserussell.com.

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," "suggest," "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 ischemic stroke, acute myocardial infarction, spinal cord injury and acute respiratory distress syndrome and other disease indications, including graft-versus-host disease. 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 success of our collaboration with Healios, our possible inability to realize commercially valuable discoveries in our collaborations with pharmaceutical and other biotechnology companies; the success of our collaborations, including our ability to reach milestones and receive milestone payments, including in connection with our collaboration with Healios, and whether any products are successfully developed and sold so that we earn royalty payments; our collaborators' ability to continue to fulfill their obligations under the terms of our collaboration agreements; the success of our efforts to enter into new strategic partnerships or collaborations and advance our programs; our ability to raise additional capital; results from our MultiStem clinical trials; the possibility of delays in, adverse results of, and excessive costs of the development process; our ability to successfully initiate and complete clinical trials; 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 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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