



February 1, 2017

Athersys Announces Closing of Public Offering of Common Stock

CLEVELAND, Feb. 01, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Athersys, Inc. (NASDAQ:ATHX) ("Athersys") today announced the closing of its previously announced underwritten public offering of 22,772,300 shares of its common stock, par value \$0.001 per share ("Common Stock"), at a price to the public of \$1.01 per share, which includes the underwriters' full exercise of their option to purchase an additional 2,970,300 shares of Common Stock that was exercised on January 31, 2017. Gross proceeds to Athersys from the offering are approximately \$23.0 million, before deducting underwriting discounts, commissions and estimated offering expenses. William Blair & Company, L.L.C. is acting as sole book-running manager and Needham & Company, LLC is acting as lead manager for the offering. Maxim Group LLC served as financial advisor to Athersys.

Athersys intends to use the net proceeds from the offering for working capital and general corporate purposes, including funding towards its Phase 3 MultiStem[®] Administration for Stroke Treatment and Enhanced Recovery Study-2 ("MASTERS-2") clinical study and its other ongoing clinical programs.

The offering was made pursuant to Athersys' effective shelf registration statement (Registration No. 333-194538) by means of a prospectus supplement and an accompanying prospectus. Prospective investors should read the prospectus supplement and accompanying prospectus and other documents that Athersys has filed with the SEC for more complete information about Athersys and the offering. A copy of the prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus relating to these securities may be obtained by contacting William Blair & Company, L.L.C., Attention: Prospectus Department, 222 West Adams Street, Chicago, IL 60606, by telephone: (800) 621-0687 or by email: prospectus@williamblair.com, or by contacting Needham & Company, LLC, Attention: Syndicate Prospectus Department, 445 Park Avenue, 4th Floor, New York, New York 10022, or by telephone at 1-800-903-4696, or by email at prospectus@needhamco.com. Electronic copies of the prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are also available free of charge on the website of the SEC at www.sec.gov.

This press release does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy any securities, nor shall there be any sale of these securities in any jurisdiction in which such offer, solicitation or sale would be unlawful prior to registration or qualification under the securities laws of any such jurisdiction.

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 neurological, cardiovascular and 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.

Forward-Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, and Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, 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 cell therapy for the treatment of ischemic stroke, acute myocardial infarction, 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 timing and nature of results from our MultiStem cell therapy clinical trials, including the MASTERS-2 Phase 3 clinical trial and the Healios clinical trial in Japan; our ability to successfully initiate and complete clinical trials of our product candidates within an expected timeframe or at all; the possibility of delays in, adverse results of, and excessive costs of the development process; the productivity, reliability and availability of suppliers, including contract research and contract manufacturing organizations; our ability to raise capital to fund our operations; the success of our efforts to enter into new strategic partnerships or collaborations and advance our programs; the success of our collaboration with Healios and others, including our ability to reach milestones and receive milestone payments, and whether any products are successfully developed and sold so that we earn royalty payments; our possible inability to realize commercially valuable discoveries in our collaborations with pharmaceutical and other biotechnology companies; our collaborators' ability to continue to fulfill their obligations under the terms of our collaboration agreements; our ability to protect and defend our intellectual property and related business operations, including the successful prosecution of our patent applications and enforcement of our patent rights, and operate our business in an environment of rapid technology and intellectual property development; changes in our business strategy; changes in external economic and market factors; changes in our industry's overall performance; 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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