

Press Release

Institute for Hepatitis and Virus Research Receives One of World's Largest Natural Products Library from Merck

Comprehensive Natural Products Library Finds New Home and Mission at Hepatitis B Foundation's Research Institute

DOYLESTOWN, PA (June 6, 2011) - The Institute for Hepatitis and Virus Research ("IHVR"), the research arm of the Hepatitis B Foundation, announced today that Merck (known outside the United States and Canada as MSD), will donate its entire natural products library, along with an undisclosed grant, to help enable open access to the library for researchers worldwide.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity for the Hepatitis B Foundation and our research institute, allowing us to make this treasure available to scientists from all over the world," said Timothy Block, Ph.D., Co-Founder and President of the Hepatitis B Foundation and IHVR and a Professor of Microbiology at Drexel University College of Medicine. He adds, "We will be able to create a screening center and provide access to this collection in a way that may lead to new discoveries and new companies in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey."

The Merck natural products library is considered to be one to the most diverse and best curated natural products libraries in the world. It includes approximately 100,000 screen-ready extracts and represents approximately 60% of all known plant genera in the world.

"Merck's natural products library will now be available to a wider scientific community with the hope it will assist others in the discovery of new therapies for patients," said Tony Ford Hutchinson, Ph.D., Merck senior vice president for Vaccines Research and Development. "Our agreement with IHVR will also keep this extensive 30-year library collection alive and well."

"Natural products" refer to compounds derived from living organisms, such as plants and microorganisms. Many medications were originally derived from natural products, including drugs to treat bacterial and fungal infections, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, immune suppressants for organ transplants, cancer and diseases and disorders of the central nervous system. In 2009, 45% of all U.S. FDA-approved drugs were derived from natural products.

According to Joel Rosen, Esq., Board Chair of the Hepatitis B Foundation, "The Natural Products collection will certainly help advance our drug discovery program at IHVR and we plan to establish a dedicated Natural Products Institute to provide access to researchers and entrepreneurs from all over the country and the world."

As part of the asset donation agreement with IHVR, Merck will continue to have access to the collection through the IHVR's open-use program where scientists and companies will apply to use the library to screen for potential new therapeutics. The collection will also be used for educational purposes to teach about natural products to ensure students also have access to this valuable resource.

"This collection will not only create a great benefit for our medical community, but also will promote greater investment in the state's budding biotechnology industry," said Pennsylvania state Senator Chuck McIlhinney (R-Bucks), who helped position the IHVR for this gift. "I look forward to seeing the IHVR put this collection to good use as a valuable medical, educational and economic development tool."

About The Institute for Hepatitis and Virus Research (IHVR): The IHVR is an independent nonprofit research institute established in 2003 by the Hepatitis B Foundation to conduct discovery research and nurture translational biotechnology in an environment conducive to interaction, collaboration and focus. To learn more, visit www.ihvr.org.

About the Hepatitis B Foundation: The Hepatitis B Foundation, celebrating its 20th anniversary as the global authority dedicated to eliminating hepatitis B, is the only national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to finding a cure and improving the quality of life for those affected with hepatitis B worldwide through research, education and patient advocacy. It is headquartered in the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center, which it created to accelerate its research mission. To learn more, visit www.hepb.org.