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Akonni Awarded Phase III Grant from NIJ to Develop Sample-to-Answer System to Identify Genetic Markers Associated with Physical Appearance

System has potential for widespread use for forensic and homeland security applications

FREDERICK, MD. – October 12, 2010 – Akonni Biosystems, a molecular diagnostics company that develops, manufactures, and plans to market sophisticated genetic testing devices for diagnosing complex infectious and human diseases, today announced receipt of a nearly \$500,000 Phase III Grant from the National Institutes of Justice (NIJ). This third round of funding from NIJ will enable Akonni to accelerate development of its transportable, sample-to-answer system for identifying single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) linked to a person's physical appearance on a low cost microarray.

As a direct result of the Human Genome Program, bioinformatics experts and geneticists are rapidly deciphering vast amounts of human genetic data. Since each person's physical appearance is determined predominantly by this genetic data, a powerful new application in forensics for physical appearance identification is emerging. This new application, called human characteristic identification (HCID) is capable of deducing an unknown individual's physical appearance from trace or degraded DNA samples, such as blood, saliva, semen, bone, body oils, or body parts. The physical traits revealed by SNPs can be as simple as eye, hair, and skin color, but can become more complex and include height, hair type (e.g., color, thickness, etc.) and facial features.

“Our microarray-based system will combine multiplex SNP discrimination with analytical accuracy, operational simplicity, affordable price points and rapid turnaround time,” said Dr. Phil Belgrader, Principal Investigator on the grant and Vice President of Research and Development at Akonni Biosystems. Dr. Belgrader adds, “The implications of our system in the field of forensics is far reaching – it has the potential to provide law enforcement, crime scene investigators and homeland security officers with a new tool to more accurately and rapidly apprehend perpetrators, identify victims and reduce the backlog of cold cases.”

HCID has the potential to be a powerful new tool with a broad-based application in forensics and homeland security. For example, when a victim or suspect cannot be identified within CODIS (Combined DNA Index System) or the National DNA Index System (NDIS), a HCID DNA profile of a person's physical characteristics can still be generated. While HCID is in its early development stages, it holds great future promise to solve crimes both faster and more accurately.

For more information please visit www.akonni.com.

About Akonni Biosystems

Akonni Biosystems was founded in 2003 and has over 20 patents issued with 13 others pending. The company's core technology is based on work developed at Argonne National Laboratory and the Engelhardt Institute of Molecular Biology and utilizes gel-drop array technologies optimized for medical applications. Supported by a series of government grants and contracts from NIH, CDC, DOE, DOD, NIJ, and NSF, the company has significantly advanced the original technology by improving the system's capabilities from sample preparation to final result. Commercial products and products in its near-term pipeline include rapid sample preparation methodologies for nucleic acid extraction (TruTip) and multiplex panel assays for detecting multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), upper respiratory infections, viral encephalitis, and hospital-acquired infections (MRSA).

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