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Monday, March 29, 2010, 4:54pm EDT

## Emory, Zirus partner on anti-viral drugs

Atlanta Business Chronicle

The **Emory Institute of Drug Discovery** and **Zirus Inc.** are joining forces to develop novel compounds to treat infectious disease.

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Buford, Ga.-based Zirus uses a proprietary method to identify genes and gene products in host cells that, when blocked, can prevent viruses from multiplying. Zirus has identified, licensed and filed patents on more than 1,000 targets.

The Emory Institute for Drug Discovery started in August 2009. It focuses on early-stage discovery and preclinical drug research aimed at developing small-molecule therapeutics.

In the agreement with Emory, Zirus will deliver targets for certain agreed upon diseases, screening potential drugs in its viral assays and conducting certain animal trials. Emory will build chemical libraries and optimize drug candidates. Both sides would share in the financial return from the results.

“The Zirus technology allows us to identify which genes and pathways are employed by the viruses inside our cells, and by blocking them we can stop the virus from replicating,” said William O’Brien, CMO of Zirus, in a statement. “In our labs, or in collaboration with the CDC, we have successfully blocked, among other viruses, Ebola, Marburg, HIV, influenza, RSV, rhinovirus, herpes virus, dengue fever virus, cowpox virus, measles virus, BVDV, and others.”

The Emory team is being led by Dennis Liotta, the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Chemistry and head of the Emory Institute of Drug Discovery. He is the inventor of record for several clinically important anti-viral drugs, including FTC (Emtriva, Emtricitabine), Truvada (Emtriva/Viread fixed dose combination), Reverset (DPC 817, D-D4FC), Racivir and Elvucitabine. Liotta also has been a consultant to major pharmaceutical companies such as Merck, GlaxoSmithKline, Boehringer Ingelheim, and Johnson & Johnson.

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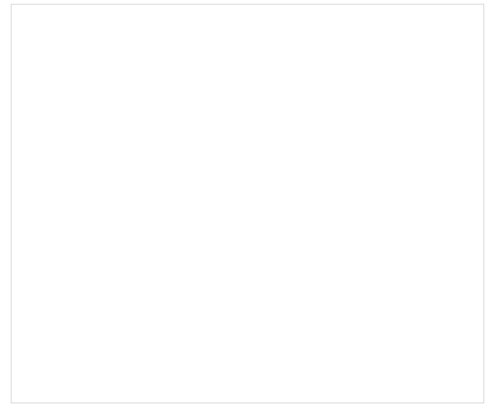
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