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360 DIAGNOSTICS AT BIO2008

One of H2O's new investment companies, 360 Diagnostics recently visited the international biotechnology convention BIO2008, in San Diego, California. The convention is one of the largest in the world, this year boasting an attendance of over 20,000 industry leaders from 70 different countries and 48 states.

The 360 Diagnostics technology, a suite of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) based enrichment and detection methods, was invented by Dr. Guoliang Fu, a scientist at Oxitec, an Oxford-based biotechnology company.

PointMan™, 360 Diagnostics' enrichment technology, can be used in existing PCR systems to preferentially select rare genetic sequences. Whereas the wild-type sequence undergoes only linear amplification, the sequence of interest is amplified exponentially, vastly increasing its proportion within the mixture. The ability to enrich and therefore subsequently detect rare mutations is very valuable in detection of very early stages of certain cancers, e.g. colorectal cancer. The PointMan™ technology can be used with any detection technology designed for the detection of genetic sequences and therefore has applications not only within the PCR sector but also other platform technologies such as microarray and mass spectrometry.

360 Diagnostics has also developed its own PCR based detection system, a second product that works in tandem with PointMan™. This is Counterpoint™, a sensitive and stable detection system designed to detect non-wild type (i.e. variant or mutated) gene sequences by means of fluorescent tags.

At Bio2008, the team from 360 Diagnostics and H2O met industry leaders to discuss these new diagnostic technologies. Dr Pete Hotten, Senior Investment Manager at H2O, who is the project manager for 360 Diagnostics, reported: "This was an extremely useful convention for us. We met a number of companies during our stay in California, and were surprised at the high level of interest. We are currently in serious discussion with several companies to investigate how the 360 Diagnostics technology can best be adapted to suit their needs."

The company is also in discussions with a major pharmaceutical company, and is expected to raise investment within the coming year.

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