

Expansion announced for Cambridge Bioinformatics Company

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genapta limited, a Cambridge based developer of next generation microarray reader technology has announced that it has secured further funding. Led by the University Challenge Fund, existing investors have provided further backing to enable genapta to capitalise on the significant market interest that exists for its products. The new funding will take the company's patented optical technology from concept to product.

DNA microarrays are a powerful new tool for genetic researchers, allowing them to map the presence or activity of specific genes. Now the sequence of the human genome has been written, micro-arrays allow the exact function of each gene to be measured and in turn used to understand and maybe even cure diseases such as cancer, diabetes and asthma. Already scientists have used micro-array technology to improve treatment strategies for leukaemia patients.

genapta's technology will allow users of micro-array technology to enhance the quality of data that can be extracted from current DNA chips, whilst forming the basis of next generation low cost readers that will be used in pharmacological and medical diagnostic environments.

Co-founder and CEO of genapta, Dr Julian White commented "We are delighted that our current investors feel it is right to move the company forward. Since its inception in 2001 genapta has made significant progress and the new investment will allow us to accelerate the development of both the technology and the company".

He continued; "Our technology does not suffer from the more common artefacts that tend to plague today's micro-array readers. In effect we make it easier for the biochemist to pull out the gene expression pattern, allowing the subsequent analysis via bio-informatic techniques to be quicker and more certain. As a result we believe our technology will form the core of micro-array readers over the coming decade"

"We are impressed both by the long term potential and immediate customer interest from the market for their technology" said Mr. Bill Matthews of the Cambridge Challenge Fund and Non-executive director of genapta. "The additional funding will allow the team to build on the momentum already built up and prepare for series A funding round in the autumn"

genapta is now working on taking the technology forward to prototype stage in conjunction with partners by Q4, 2002, with product release slated for Q2, 2003.

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Notes for Editors – Microarray Technology

All the information needed to make a human being can be stored on a single DVD. Over the last decade groups around the world have been working tirelessly to extract and order this data, in the process building a unique picture of the human species. The next step is to use the data for the diagnosis and, ultimately, treatment of most forms of inherited and infectious disease.

Unlike a DVD, this rich seam of information is locked up in molecular scale building blocks that need to be coaxed into giving up their structure. Until recently this was done in a step by step fashion. For a piece of DNA with many thousand of units this was a time consuming process (the human genome is composed of about 3 billion units).

To counter this extraordinary bottleneck, the microarray concept was born which allows many thousand of parallel experiments to be carried out on one standard microscope slide. Each experiment takes place in a spot a few tens of microns in diameter. To understand the outcome of the experiment the spots are read using laser beams which excite specific luminescent markers attached to the DNA which tell the experimenter the outcome of that mini-experiment.

The microarray reader is the self contained system which takes the slide, scans the laser light across the surface of the array, collecting and collating the results of the many thousands of parallel experiments.

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[Photograph available on request]