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EpiStem's Radiation Damage Models for Intestinal Stem Cells Chosen by NIH Biodefence Programme

EpiStem Ltd announced today that it has been selected to provide in vivo efficacy testing services for the U.S. National Institutes of Health's (NIH) research programme on Medical Countermeasures Against Radiological and Nuclear Threats. This research programme at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) seeks to develop preventions and treatments for radiation sickness following a nuclear terrorist attack.

EpiStem will provide access to its industry-respected models to evaluate the efficacy and mode of action of potential new treatments to protect and repair the intestinal tract when exposed to radiation. The Company initially established these models in the early 1990's to evaluate the ability of existing treatments and new therapies to reduce the intestinal side effects in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation. The models quantitatively evaluate efficacy, optimise drug dose and dose scheduling, and elucidate mode of action. EpiStem's models have been widely used for agents that have gone on to clinical trials in cancer patients, most notably Amgen's Kepivance®.

EpiStem will serve as a subcontractor to the University of Maryland, which is leading the US government's effort to identify new treatments for radiation sickness.

Dr. Tom MacVittie, who leads the programme at the University of Maryland, School of Medicine, commented: "EpiStem's experience in evaluating agents to protect the intestinal tract from toxicity are an integral part of our biodefence drug development program at the University of Maryland. Their international reputation, led by Professor Chris Potten, and expertise in this area are without peer."

Professor Chris Potten, a world-renowned expert on the behaviour of adult epithelial stem cells and co-founder of EpiStem commented: "We're delighted to participate in the NIAID programme to develop treatments for radiation sickness. Protection and regeneration of the adult gut stem cells is a crucial objective for treating casualties following a nuclear event. The models that we have developed at EpiStem will not only help with establishing the most effective treatment regimens they will also help us identify the modes of action of new drugs to help against nuclear terrorist events."

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