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Breakthrough Research Identifies How Cells From Pigs May Cure Diabetes

Spring Point Project grows donor pigs in the
Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation Islet Resource Facility

September, 2007 – MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Within three years, insulin-producing islet cells from pigs may be used in clinical trials on a path to finally cure insulin dependant diabetes.

This key finding was the discovery of Dr. Bernhard Hering, Scientific Director of the Diabetes Institute for Immunology & Transplantation at the University of Minnesota and his team, who documented their medical breakthrough in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature Medicine* in March of 2006.

On Thursday, September 20, at 10:00 a.m. CDT, Hering will present the latest research on pig islet xenotransplantation at the Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation Symposium at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis in Minneapolis, MN.

The symposium will be part of The Transplantation Society's 2007 Joint Conference (www.cts-ipita-ixa-2007.org), an international event that will unite the greatest innovators from three sections of the Transplantation Society – the Cell Transplant Society (CTS), the International Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association (IPITA) and the International Xenotransplantation Association (IXA) – for the first time in history. Hering also serves as the Joint Conference president.

Research has shown that the transplantation of islet cells, harvested from the pancreas of a pig, yields a long-term reversal of diabetes in monkeys, opening the path to unprecedented new opportunities for human patients with the disease. To oversee immunosuppression issues, researchers are now working to transplant porcine islets in an engineered pre-vascularized, cytoprotective and immune-privileged implantation site. This procedure has a number of advantages including:

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- Pigs will be able to provide unlimited islet tissue in a few years.
- Pig islets from young disease-free donors are superior to cadaver human islets.
- The actual risk of infectious disease transmission is lower with xenotransplantation of islets.
- Bioengineering of islet implantation sites into a pre-vascularized, cytoprotective and immune-privileged site will allow for local and selective immunosuppression.
- Promoting long-term survival of the porcine islet xenografts in humans.

As Hering and his team prepare to enter into clinical trials – slated to commence within three years – Spring Point Project (www.springpointproject.org), a non-profit organization, is helping to grow a population of medical grade pigs so that once the cure is realized, diabetes sufferers will find the treatment to be widely available and affordable.

Dr. Henk-Jan Schuurman, CEO of Spring Point Project, will moderate the Source Pigs for Xenotransplantation Trials Symposium on Saturday, September 15 at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, during the Joint Conference.

In order to have high health pigs available for clinical trials, Spring Point Project now operates a 21,000-square-foot biosecure facility in Western Wisconsin called the Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation Islet Resource Facility. Inside, a team of highly skilled veterinarians and animal care staff is actively raising high health pigs in compliance with governmental regulations – a charge that requires the pigs to be housed in an ultra clean biosecure environment, fed special food and given only purified water to drink and filtered air to breathe.

"Continuing to populate our Islet Resource Facility brings us closer to meeting our ultimate goal of curing diabetes," Schuurman says. "With the pigs that are currently housed in our biosecure facility, we're already expediting the widespread availability of islet cell tissue so that an adequate supply of pig donors will be available for clinical islet cell transplantation trials using patients with diabetes."

In celebration of its assistance with preclinical research and strides made toward preparing for clinical trials, Spring Point Project will host a reception on Sunday, September 16 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. CDT at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, during the Joint Conference.

For more information about the 2007 Joint Conference, visit www.cts-ipita-ixa-2007.org. Contact Molly Kersten (mkersten@r-p.com) to receive an abstract on Dr. Hering's presentation, or to learn more about Spring Point Project.

Spring Point Project is a nonprofit organization that is working to expedite the affordable and widespread availability of islet tissue for diabetes care by developing premier source pigs for islet Xenotransplantation. Spring Point Project and the University of Minnesota work in partnership to provide the source and science needed to move toward a cure for diabetes.

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The Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation, a not-for-profit worldwide network based in Washington, D.C., has made a substantial contribution to Spring Point Project by donating

more than $30 million toward the cure for diabetes research, including $6.2 million to Spring Point Project to accelerate Dr. Hering's clinical trials.

Additionally, Spring Point Project has received $3 million in donations from Pat and Ann Ryan and Jim and Colleen Ryan. Their donations included personal gifts and contributions through Ryan Companies US, Inc.

To contact Spring Point Project, visit www.SpringPointProject.org. To contact Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation, visit www.diabeteswellness.net. To contact the Diabetes Institute for Immunology and Transplantation, visit www.diabetesinstitute.org.

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