

PRESS RELEASE FEBRUARY 16, 2006

Helsinn and Biovitrum enter a license agreement for Nordic marketing of Aloxi[®], a drug that prevents nausea and vomiting in cancer patients

Helsinn Healthcare SA, Switzerland and Biovitrum AB, Sweden announce the signing of an agreement granting Biovitrum the exclusive license and distribution rights of Aloxi[®] (Palonosetron hydrochloride) in the Nordic territory.

Aloxi[®] is a potent and long-lasting antiemetic belonging to the second generation of serotonin (5-HT₃) antagonists, the leading class for the prevention of nausea and vomiting induced by chemotherapy. Aloxi[®] showed a great efficacy during the acute and delayed phase after chemotherapy treatment as compared to other first generation 5-HT₃ antagonists. The product is already commercialised in the US, where over three million treatments have been completed successfully. Aloxi[®] is currently on the market in some European countries, as well as in several countries of Latin America, where the trade name is Onicit[®].

There is still a medical need for a better prevention of nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy treatments. In 2004 the US National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines indicated Aloxi[®] as the treatment of choice for the prevention of acute and delayed nausea and vomiting due to moderately emetogenic chemotherapies.

- We are delighted to sign this new agreement with Biovitrum and look forward to initiating a successful co-operation for Aloxi[®] in the Nordic territory", said Dr. Riccardo Braglia, Managing Director of Helsinn Healthcare SA. "We are pleased that the patients and the medical community in this region will enjoy the benefits of an innovative antiemetic like Aloxi[®].
- We are pleased to enter this agreement with Helsinn and to be the partner company to launch Aloxi[®] in the Nordic countries, said Mats Pettersson, CEO of Biovitrum. The drug fits well into our product portfolio, which already contains medicine against adverse effects of chemotherapeutics. We are also very active in the field of 5-HT receptor active compounds in our R&D operations. Aloxi[®] thus fits our strategy very well and we are enthusiastic about the collaboration.

About Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea and Vomiting (CINV)

CINV is estimated to affect 85% of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and can result in a delay or discontinuation of chemotherapy treatments. The supportive care area is becoming of paramount importance to help patients deal with adverse events of anticancer therapies. With good supportive care drugs, cancer patients are able to tolerate the anti-cancer treatment to a greater extent, improving their chances of completing their treatment course successfully with a better quality of life.

About Aloxi[®]

Aloxi[®] is a selective 5-HT₃-receptor antagonist, developed for the prevention of CINV, with a long half-life of 40 hours and at least 30 times higher receptor binding affinity than currently available compounds. Since its availability in USA in September 2003, there are over 3 million successful uses of Aloxi[®]. The product showed to be effective in preventing both acute and delayed CINV in patients receiving emetogenic chemotherapies. For more information about this product please visit www.palonosetron.net and www.aloxi.com.

About Helsinn Healthcare

Helsinn Healthcare SA is a privately owned pharmaceutical group with headquarters in Switzerland and is the worldwide licensor of Aloxi[®]. Helsinn's core business is the licensing of pharmaceuticals in niche therapeutic areas. The company's business strategy is to in-license early-stage new chemical entities and complete their development from the performance of pre-clinical/clinical studies and CMC development to the attainment of market approvals in strategic markets (U.S. and Europe). Helsinn's products are eventually out-licensed to its marketing partners for distribution. The active pharmaceutical ingredients and the finished dosage forms are manufactured at Helsinn's cGMP facilities and supplied worldwide to its customers. For more information see www.helsinn.com.

About Biovitrum

Biovitrum is one of the larger biopharma companies in Europe. With operations in Sweden and in the UK Biovitrum conducts research and develops pharmaceuticals for both broad diseases and conditions that affect smaller patient populations. Biovitrum focuses on drugs for the treatment of obesity, diabetes, inflammation and blood diseases as well as a number of well defined niche indications. Biovitrum develops and produces protein-based drugs on a contractual basis and markets a range of specialist pharmaceuticals primarily in the Nordic countries. Biovitrum has approximately 500 employees. For more information see www.biovitrum.com/.

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