AVI BioPharma Reports Successful Inhibition of Multiple Subtypes of Influenza A Using NEUGENE Antisense Therapeutic

3/30/06

PORTLAND, Ore.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--March 30, 2006--

Preclinical Results by Four Independent Laboratories Summarized and Presented at Keystone Symposia: Advances in Influenza Research

AVI BioPharma, Inc. (Nasdaq:AVII), today announced the presentation of research results titled "Inhibition of Multiple Subtypes of Influenza A Virus in Cell Culture with Morpholino Oligomers" at the Keystone Symposia conference "Advances in Influenza Research: From Birds to Bench to Bedside." The symposium will be held March 28 to April 2, 2006, in Steamboat Springs, Colo.

"Our presentation summarizes the results from AVI's collaborations with four independent research laboratories from around the world," said Patrick L. Iversen, Ph.D., senior vice president of research and development at AVI. "The key finding here is that our NEUGENE(R) therapeutics continue to show efficacy against all strains of influenza A, including H5N1, the avian influenza strain that is currently causing global concern as a potential pandemic pathogen."

The poster presentation includes results generated by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.; Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand; the Public Health Agency of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Oregon State University, Corvallis, Ore.

The summary results show that AVI's NEUGENE agents targeting a highly conserved region in the genetic start-site of influenza A viruses were highly effective in inhibiting replication of multiple influenza A subtypes, including H1N1, H3N2, H3N8, H5N1 and H7N7. This suggests that a single NEUGENE agent could be developed to inhibit replication of multiple strains of Influenza A virus.

Based on these findings, as well as the results generated by additional studies in other viruses, AVI plans to file an IND application with the FDA later this year for the treatment of influenza A virus using NEUGENE antisense drugs.

About Influenza A Viruses

Influenza, or flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. On average 5 percent to 20 percent of the U.S. population are infected with the flu each year, resulting in 36,000 deaths. Influenza A virus is an enveloped negative-strand RNA virus, with eight genome segments that code for 10 proteins. Influenza strains are subtyped according to the antigenic and genetic nature of their surface glycoproteins: hemagglutinin (HA or H) and neuraminidase (NA or N). Fifteen H and nine N subtypes have been identified, with three associated with widespread human disease (H1N1, H2N2 and H3N2). In addition, several subtypes of avian influenza virus -- H5N1, H7N7 and H9N2 -- can infect and cause disease in humans.

The current influenza pandemic in birds throughout Asia and in Eastern Europe is caused by the H5N1 subtype. It is thought that co-infection of man or certain animals (such as pigs) with both H1N1 and H5N1 can lead to a reassortment or recombination of viral particles, resulting in the emergence of virus with dangerous public health properties, namely new antigens to which the human population does not have immunity and which have the ability to spread from person to person. It is believed that emergence of avian flu by this general mechanism may have led to the worldwide pandemics of 1918, 1957 and 1968.

About AVI BioPharma

AVI BioPharma develops therapeutic products for the treatment of life-threatening diseases using third-generation NEUGENE antisense drugs. AVI's lead NEUGENE antisense compound is designed to target cell proliferation disorders, including cardiovascular restenosis, cancer and polycystic kidney disease. In addition to targeting specific genes in the body, AVI's antiviral program uses NEUGENE antisense compounds to combat disease by targeting single-stranded RNA viruses, including West Nile virus, hepatitis C virus, dengue virus, Ebola virus and influenza A virus. AVI has introduced a NEUGENE-based exon-skipping technology called ESPRIT therapy. More information about AVI is available on the company's Web site at http://www.avibio.com.

"Safe Harbor" Statement under the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995: The statements that are not historical facts contained in this release are forward-looking statements that involve risks and uncertainties, including, but not limited to, the results of research and development efforts, the results of preclinical and clinical testing, the effect of regulation by the FDA and other agencies, the impact of competitive products, product development, commercialization and technological difficulties, and other risks detailed in the company's Securities and Exchange Commission filings.

CONTACT: AVI BioPharma, Inc.
Michael Hubbard, 503-227-0554
hubbard@avibio.com
or
Lippert/Heilshorn & Associates Inc. (Investor Contacts)
Bruce Voss, 310-691-7100
bvoss@lhai.com
or

Jody Cain, 310-691-7100
jcain@lhai.com
or
Waggener Edstrom Worldwide (Press Contacts)
Bioscience and Healthcare Practice
Andie Long, 202-326-0791
andreal@waggeneredstrom.com

SOURCE: AVI BioPharma, Inc.