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## TWO TAMPA INSTITUTIONS JOIN FORCES TO COMBAT ONE OF FLORIDA'S BIGGEST HEALTH CHALLENGES

*Moffitt Cancer Center and Morphogenesis team up to test new melanoma therapy*

TAMPA, Fla. (April 20, 2016) – Morphogenesis, Inc., a research and development company, announced today it is partnering with Moffitt Cancer Center to test an innovative new way to treat one of Florida's biggest health challenges - melanoma. Florida ranks second, behind California, in the number of new cases of melanoma each year. It was estimated by the American Cancer Society that in 2015, 5,480 new cases of melanoma would be diagnosed in the State.

In order to address this deadly cancer, Morphogenesis has entered into an agreement with Moffitt Cancer Center to study the safety and effectiveness of a therapeutic DNA vaccine. The vaccine, developed by Morphogenesis, delivers a single gene directly into the melanoma skin tumor where it is expressed as a highly immunogenic protein that guides the immune system to recognize and destroy melanoma cells throughout the body.

"This is the type of collaborative innovation that will save lives and transform the Innovation Alliance area here in Tampa," remarked Mark Sharpe, Executive Director of the Tampa Innovation Alliance. The collaborative study will lead directly to a human trial that will test the vaccine in patients with melanoma. "We are extremely excited about bringing this powerful therapy to people right here in Tampa, said Pat Lawman, Ph.D., CEO of Morphogenesis. "Our clinical study with this product in horses has shown how exceptionally safe and effective the vaccine can be for melanoma. Now we have the opportunity to expand the body of information to include people."

Shari Pilon-Thomas, Ph.D., Assistant Member of Moffitt's Department of Immunology, will be overseeing the project. "The extensive testing that we are embarking on now with Morphogenesis is based on preliminary work that we have already completed using the vaccine. From what we have observed, the technology is powerful, yet extremely simple. We believe that we can move this through to human patients quite quickly." One of the driving forces behind the collaboration between Moffitt and Morphogenesis is that the focus of Dr. Pilon-Thomas' research is very complementary to the approach that Morphogenesis has taken, i.e. to enhance immune responses to tumors in patients with melanoma. By reducing the tumor's ability to evade the body's immune system in combination with vaccine approaches to enhance tumor-specific (T-cell) responses, Dr.

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Pilon-Thomas is hoping to translate pre-clinical results into clinical trials to improve therapies for patients with metastatic melanoma.

Morphogenesis and its subsidiary company, Veterinary Oncology Services, Inc. have already established themselves as the global pioneer in bringing immunotherapy to companion animals with cancer. “We are working very closely with veterinarians across the U.S. who are using a personalized form of the same vaccine to treat multiple types of naturally occurring cancer in dogs, cats and horses,” Morphogenesis’ Chief Clinical Officer, Ashraf Dehlawi, said. “What we are seeing in the pet animals receiving our vaccines, gives us confidence that this cutting edge technology will work extremely well for human cancers.”

According to Meghan Gentilini, P.S.M., a Research Staff Scientist at Morphogenesis, “When this direct DNA approach is proven successful in melanoma, it could have far reaching ramifications.” The low cost and ease of production; the ability to store and transport the vaccine without refrigeration; the ability to directly inject the vaccine into a patient’s tumor; and the non-toxic nature of the direct DNA vaccine make it possible to treat multiple forms of cancer in developing countries where cost and logistics currently prevent even the use of standard of care therapies.

“We are extremely excited about the global implications of our technology,” said Dr. Pat Lawman. “While some of the other immuno-oncology products being tested have tremendous promise, they will be prohibitively expensive and logistically unfeasible for treating pets and human patients in developing countries.”

Morphogenesis’ President, Michael Lawman, Ph.D., added that, “The immuno-oncology products that we are developing will be instrumental in our mission to end needless suffering. The lack of side-effects from our vaccine means that there will be no added expense for supportive care needed with other therapies to treat chemotoxic or immunotoxic reactions.”

## **ABOUT MORPHOGENESIS**

*Morphogenesis is a privately-held biotechnology company structured to serve the rapidly growing cell therapy, biologics and tissue engineering markets. Morphogenesis has developed a multi-indication cancer therapy which educates the immune system to attack tumor cells throughout the body without damaging other cells or systems. Its subsidiary, Veterinary Oncology Services, Inc., assists veterinary physicians in providing this non-toxic, personalized treatment for many types of cancers in cats, dogs and horses. For more information, please follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and visit [www.morphogenesis-inc.com](http://www.morphogenesis-inc.com) or call 813-875-6600 you can also visit [www.veterinaryoncologyservices.com](http://www.veterinaryoncologyservices.com) or call 813-877-7896.*

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