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Wyeth sets up research facility at UCD Conway

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Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mr Micheál Martin TD announced that Wyeth Research, a subsidiary of Wyeth Corporation - one of the largest research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare product companies in the world - is to establish a bio-therapeutic drug discovery research facility in at UCD Conway Institute, with the support of IDA Ireland. The EUR13 million facility will employ 12 top class research scientists focusing on product discovery, pre-clinical research and drug discovery technology development.

Wyeth Research Ireland will be a wholly integrated protein drug discovery and development operation. It will utilise advanced new technologies to discover the next generation of therapeutic biopharmaceuticals in three distinct product families - antibodies, fusion proteins and native biologics. Its work will focus on five main disease areas: inflammation, oncology, women's health and musculoskeletal biology and drug discovery technology development.

Minister Martin said, "This facility is a significant endorsement of Ireland as a location for drug discovery research. It will demonstrate to the international pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical community throughout the world the calibre of this country's talents and abilities in the field of leading edge Research and Development".

"This investment is exactly what with the Government's policy and IDA Ireland's strategy in Research and Development is aiming to achieve in the Biopharmaceutical sector." The Minister added.

UCD, Vice-president for Innovation and Corporate Partnerships, Professor Catherine Godson, said that the Wyeth move was a vindication of the success of the Government's investment in research infrastructure at UCD. "The initiative proves the value of a university campus as a place of research for industry. We see this as an opportunity for UCD Conway Institute and critical to our plans for the development of the National Institute of Bioprocess Research and Training (NIBRT). The founding principle of the UCD Conway Institute was to support the development of the pharma industry in Ireland. The arrival of Wyeth on the Belfield campus builds on our existing successful relationships and I hope, is a precursor to much bigger collaborations."

"Wyeth is delighted to be establishing a biotherapeutic research laboratory at the Conway Institute at University College Dublin. This collaboration reaffirms our commitment to Ireland, and builds on our capacity for development of biotechnology therapies that will undoubtedly lead to long term benefits to patient health," said Frank Walsh, Executive Vice President and Head of Wyeth Discovery Research. "Building upon our major manufacturing investment in Grange Castle we can continue to maximize the opportunity for interaction between academic and Wyeth scientists by taking the innovative step of placing a new Wyeth Discovery lab within the Conway Institute itself."

Background on Wyeth

Wyeth Research Ireland's discovery of the next generation of therapeutic biopharmaceuticals will focus on three distinct product families: Antibodies - this is a growing area of biopharmaceuticals and the products are used in the treatment of cancer, Crohn's disease and a range of other complaints; Fusion Proteins, which is a class of drugs that is exemplified by Wyeth's flagship product, Enbrel, used for treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis; and Native Biologics - this class of drugs represents the earliest category of biotherapeutic drugs approved by the FDA and includes interferons, insulins, clotting factors and growth hormones.

Wyeth Corporation's pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical Rchr(38)D operations are divided into two basic Units – Discovery and Development. The Irish facility will be within the Discovery Unit, which is directed toward new

chemical and biological entities. The Development Unit's activities include: chemical, biological and pharmaceutical development; drug safety and metabolism; clinical research and development.

Wyeth Corporation, headquartered in Madison, New Jersey, US, is the 10th largest pharmaceutical company in the world and employs 44,000 people. It produces pharmaceuticals, consumer healthcare products, vaccines and nutritional products. In 2004 the company had sales of \$17.4 billion and net earnings of \$1.23 billion. R&D expenditure for the period was \$2.46 billion and the company employ 44,000 people worldwide. Wyrth Corporation has four existing facilities in Ireland - at Grange Castle in Dublin; Newbridge; Sligo; and Askeaton in Co. Limerick, - employing a total of over 3,000 people.

Background on UCD Conway Institute

UCD Conway Institute of Biomolecular and Biomedical Research was founded in 1999 and received funding from the Higher Education Authority and private donors under all three cycles of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL). The total funding committed to date amounts to EUR92 million. This vital infrastructural development has provided world-class facilities for researchers in the biosciences, allowing them to compete successfully on the international stage and to place Irish bioscience in the global spotlight. The Institute is a leader in the development of 4th level postgraduate learning in Ireland. Its education programme includes a 3-year PhD in Molecular Neuroimmunology (MNIEST), covering the interactions between the immune and the nervous systems and funded under the prestigious EU Marie Curie Actions.

The UCD Conway programme is organised into three centres: Molecular Medicine, which investigates the molecular basis of disease, unravelling the causes of important disorders and explaining their effects on the body. Integrative Biology, which examines the role of individual molecules in the overall function of cells, tissues and organs. Synthesis and Chemical Biology, which focuses on creating and understanding new molecules, leaving to the discovery of new or refined drugs and the development of innovative tools to investigate biological problems.

The extensive interaction between centres means that scientists from different disciplines, with different skills and viewpoints, can work together. This allows them to make exciting discoveries and make important contributions to our understanding of the causes and treatment of diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular and lung disorders as well as breast and prostate cancer.