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## **Astex extends research collaboration with Aventis**

**Cambridge, UK, 8 June 2004:** Astex Technology, the fragment-based drug discovery and development company, today announced that it has extended its existing structural biology research agreement with Aventis in the area of cytochrome P450s. Under the terms of the extension, Aventis has agreed that Astex will continue to supply Aventis with its proprietary crystal structures of human drug-metabolising cytochrome P450s. The original research agreement was signed in March 2002. Financial details were not disclosed.

"We are very pleased to be extending our existing collaboration with Aventis," said Tim Haines, Astex's Chief Executive. "The considerable successes we have achieved in the last four years including solving the first crystal structures of human cytochrome P450s, reflects Astex's pioneering expertise in the use of high throughput X-ray crystallography."

Astex has achieved two major scientific breakthroughs in solving the first human cytochrome P450 structures - 2C9 and 3A4 - key members of this important family of drug metabolising enzymes. Astex scientists published the crystal structure of human P450 2C9 last year in the leading science journal *Nature*. Astex's proprietary P450 structural information enables the company and its collaborators to generate lead compounds with optimal DMPK properties and so reduce attrition rates in drug development.

In July 2003, Astex extended its research collaboration for its P450 programme with AstraZeneca. In addition, Astex has on-going P450 research collaborations with Mitsubishi Pharma and Fujisawa Pharma.

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### **Notes to Editors**

Cytochrome P450s are the most prominent group of drug-metabolising enzymes in humans. The action of these proteins is the cause of adverse reactions to many marketed drugs and drug-combination therapies. The administration of certain drugs may also be ineffective or even harmful as a result of patient-specific variations in cytochrome P450s. In addition, many failures in drug development have been attributed to this class of proteins. The insight provided by the crystal structure of cytochrome P450s aims to improve the success rates and economics of drug discovery and result in safer and more effective new medicines.

### **About Astex**

Astex is a privately owned biotechnology company that is discovering and developing new, small molecule drugs using its pioneering fragment-based drug discovery platform, Pyramid(TM). Astex has a portfolio of compounds that are primarily in oncology; the most advanced of which are due to enter clinical trials in 2005. Astex plans to develop its products to proof of concept in man (Phase II) before seeking partners for later stage clinical development and marketing.

Pyramid(TM) exploits the unique capability of high-throughput X-ray crystallography to accurately define the binding of low affinity fragments to the crystal structures of therapeutic target proteins. The fragments are subsequently optimised into potent and selective drug candidates that bind to these targets. This approach is facilitated by Astex's integrated drug discovery capabilities, which cover all aspects of structural biology using X-ray crystallography and NMR, bioinformatics, computational and medicinal chemistry, cell biology, DMPK and *in vivo* pharmacology.

Astex has *drug discovery collaborations* with AstraZeneca (for Alzheimer's disease), Schering AG (multi-target), Boehringer Ingelheim (multi-target), The Institute of Cancer Research and Cancer Research Technology (for oncology target PKB) and The Wellcome Trust, The Institute of Cancer Research and Cancer Research Technology (for oncology target B-RAF). Astex has further *research agreements* with AstraZeneca, Aventis, Mitsubishi Pharma and Fujisawa Pharma focused on solving and utilising novel cytochrome P450 crystal structures.

Astex was established in 1999 and is well financed by leading, blue chip US and European investors. The company has raised \$91 million in two financing rounds in December 2001 and October 2003. Astex operates from a 36,000 sq ft, state-of-the-art facility on the Cambridge Science Park, Cambridge, UK.

For further information about Astex please visit the Company's website at [www.astex-technology.com](http://www.astex-technology.com)