Synthetic Biology Firm Triton Algae Raises $5M in Series A Round

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By a GenomeWeb staff reporter

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NEW YORK (GenomeWeb News) – Synthetic biology technology firm Triton Algae today announced it raised $5 million in a Series A equity financing round.

The investment made by Heliae Technology Holdings will go toward ongoing R&D at San Diego-based Triton, expansion of its PhycoLogix platform, and commercialization of its first product called PhycoShield.

PhycoLogix is for the production of proteins in algae. According to Triton, algae can produce compounds that other organisms can't, can be safely consumed without modification, and can be cultivated a large scale inexpensively. It added that it is producing complex proteins, enzymes, and other biologics that are cost-effective and can be applied immediately in agricultural, pharmaceutical, and other retail markets.

PhycoShield, a line of proteins, is the company's first product offering. The first PhycoShield product is Mammary Associated Amyloid, a protein found in colostrum that stimulates mucus production in the digestive tract, which prevents the colonization of pathogenic bacteria that can cause diarrhea-related diseases. MAA will be commercially available next year, Triton said.

The company also is developing products for clinical oncology applications, including therapies developed by the firm's scientific founder, Stephen Mayfield, who is Triton's chief scientific officer.

The firm's co-founder is Jason Pyle who serves as Triton's CEO and chairman.

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Circulating tumor cell diagnostics developer **Epic Sciences** has appointed **Murali Prahalad** to be president and CEO.
Prahalad formerly held multiple posts at **Life Technologies**, and most recently he was VP of corporate strategies. In that role, he helped shape investment priorities across Life Tech's research tools, clinical diagnostics, and applied markets portfolios, said Epic in a statement.
Before he joined Life Technologies, he was VP of business development at **Sequenom**, and he was a consultant for **The Advisory Board Company** and an analyst at **Gemini Consulting** in Tokyo.

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What do you think of

Pathway Genomics has named **Karl Odquist** to be executive director of managed care. He will be responsible for managed care contracts and reimbursement, government affairs, and clinical evidence generation for the firm's diagnostic services. Odquist has over 20 years of experience working with pharmaceutical payors and the medical benefits business, including working at **Prometheus Laboratories**.

Nashville, Tenn.-based molecular diagnostics firm **Insight Genetics** this week announced that **David Burg** has joined the company as associate director of business development. Burg will lead sales and marketing for the company's Insight Molecular Labs. Prior to joining Insight, Burg was regional sales director for **Response Genetics**. He has also been a senior executive oncology account manager with **GlaxoSmithKline**.

Upcoming Events

newborn genomic screening efforts?

- They appear to be considering all the ramifications of such screening.
- They are moving too fast. This needs to be better studied.
- They don't take the child's right not to know into account.
- They are moving too slow. Such information is needed now.

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Science

RNA biomarkers in the blood may be able to identify people who are at risk of committing suicide, according to a study in *Molecular Psychiatry*. Researchers looked for genes that were differentially expressed in the blood of people with bipolar disorder who had suicide ideation and compared them to others from the larger bipolar group whose suicide ideation state did not change. The top blood biomarker for suicide risk was SAT1, while CD24 was the top protective marker.

Business

The FDA cleared for marketing BioMérieux's Vitek MS clinical microbiology mass spectrometry system. The system MALDI-TOF mass spec to identify disease-causing organisms including bacteria and yeast, and it is the first such platform cleared for clinical use in the US. MALDI-based platforms like the Vitek MS can offer improvements in speed, price, and accuracy over traditional biochemical methods. A competing mass spec-based system, Bruker's MALDI Biotyper, is awaiting an FDA decision.

Funding

Ten institutes at the National Institutes of Health plan to provide $17.5 million in funding next year to support a network of as many as 14 consortia that will pursue clinical research projects focused on rare diseases. A major aim for these centers will be to investigate potential biomarkers for disease risk and severity and to measure clinical outcomes that could be applicable to clinical trials. Each Rare Diseases Clinical Research Consortia will focus on at least three rare diseases, disorders, conditions, or syndromes.

GenomeWebinars

Genomic Biomarker Development: Considerations for Outsourcing and Validation

Sponsor: EMD Millipore

This webinar was recorded August 27.

GenomeWeb and EMD Millipore invite you to view a webinar discussing issues that clinical and translational groups must consider when adopting genomic technologies for patient care and clinical trial stratification.

Register here to view the playback or download the recording.