

Axon Ships Revolutionary PatchXpress Drug-Screening Platforms

Union City, CA, September 18, 2003: Drug-discovery instrumentation maker Axon Instruments Inc. has made the first revenue shipments of its revolutionary new PatchXpress 7000A™ high-throughput patch-clamp drug-screening platform. PatchXpress customers include pharmaceutical, biotech, and safety-screening companies. The first sales of the PatchXpress come amidst a great deal of interest in the system, which generates high-quality data for drug-screening programs aimed at ion-channel targets. Axon will demonstrate the PatchXpress in the Axon booth at the upcoming Society for Biomolecular Screening (SBS) conference in Portland, OR, from September 21 to 25.

The PatchXpress 7000A is the world's first commercially available automated planar patch-clamp workstation for true, tight-seal whole-cell voltage clamp. It automates the patch-clamp technique that won Neher and Sakmann the 1991 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, using the technique to screen drug libraries for compounds that act on ion-channel targets. The PatchXpress patch clamps 16 mammalian cells at once then synchronizes drug delivery, electrical stimulation and data acquisition for these. Hundreds of compounds can be tested with minimal user intervention. The data files are managed and analyzed by Axon's bioinformatics platform for electrophysiological data, DataXpress.

Ion channels are implicated in pain, stroke, epilepsy, diabetes and high blood pressure. Replacing fast but less reliable high-throughput techniques, and accurate but slow manual testing, the PatchXpress massively increases the rate at which lead compounds can be identified. Only a small proportion of these survive the exhaustive testing required before a marketable drug is produced, so it is crucial to pharmaceutical companies that they keep their drug candidate pipelines filled. The PatchXpress has a major role to play in feeding these pipelines for drugs to treat the conditions listed above.

At the heart of the PatchXpress is the *Sealchip*₁₆™ planar electrode, made exclusively for Axon by Aviva Biosciences Corp. These high-quality chips reliably form high-resistance patch seals which, backed by Axon's proven expertise in electrophysiological instrumentation and software, result in high-content, high-quality data. Combining this quality with the high-throughput capability of the PatchXpress, the workstation is ideal for sophisticated research projects as well as for the simpler assays typically used for high-volume drug screening.

Dr. Andy Blatz, Vice-President for Screening Technologies at Axon is excited with the product release, and with the interest being shown in it, "The PatchXpress system suddenly makes drug discovery a radically more efficient process. Ph.D-level researchers previously needed to produce the accurate, high-content results the PatchXpress delivers are now free to concentrate on the drugs shown to have potential for the marketplace, rather than just identifying them in the first instance."

Axon Instruments, Inc., (www.axon.com) located in Union City, California and Melbourne, Australia, was founded in 1983. It produces a broad spectrum of instrumentation and software for cellular neurosciences, genomics, and cell-based screening. In cellular neurosciences and genomics, Axon is widely recognized as one of the world's pre-eminent manufacturers of drug discovery instrumentation. The company's goal is to

produce a range of superior yet affordable instrument and software systems for drug discovery aimed at the pharmaceutical industry, biotechnology companies, and academic researchers. Axon Instruments is a California corporation listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (symbol: AXN.AX).

The SBS 2003 website is <http://www.sbs-online.org>.

For more information contact:

Dr Chris Mathes,
Product Line Manager, HTE Patch-Clamp Systems,
Axon Instruments, Inc.
+1 (510) 675-6200
chrism@axon.com