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Empire Genomics and Reprogenetics Join Forces
10/15/2007

BUFFALO, N.Y., and LIVINGSTON, N.J., Oct. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- Empire Genomics, developing high throughput technologies that enable genome-wide analyses, and Reprogenetics, a genetics laboratory specializing in Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD), announce data supporting a new technique to significantly improve the identification of genetic and chromosomal abnormalities from just a single or small group of embryonic cell(s). The microarray-based technology from Empire Genomics, tested and developed for in vitro fertilization in partnership with Reprogenetics, has multiple advantages when applied to PGD:

DIVERSITY

The data will be presented jointly by Empire Genomics and Reprogenetics at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the ASRM in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, October 17, 2007.

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"We are convinced this new technology will enable us to improve screening for genetic defects as well as improve the pregnancy outcome for patients undergoing IVF by reducing spontaneous abortions and genetically affected conceptions," said Santiago Munne, Ph.D., Reprogenetics director. "Currently PGD requires highly skilled and experienced embryologists to process the cells for the current technology. This new technology simplifies this step making PGD more accessible to IVF centers and their patients."

Empire Genomics has developed a technology called array-based Comparative Genomic Hybridization (aCGH) that determines gains or losses of genetic material to streamline screening for chromosomal defects such as Down's syndrome. DNA microarray technology places DNA representing genes and chromosomes on a slide for comparison with a normal set, and the Reprogenetics and Empire Genomics collaboration has resulted in the successful application of this technology to preimplantation genetic screening.

"With our advanced genomic technology we are able to screen all of the chromosomes from a single cell obtained from an embryo, as opposed to conventional techniques that selectively screen just half of the chromosomes, and for use in IVF, we can complete the process rapidly to allow for embryo screening before implantation has to take place," said Norma Nowak, Ph.D., Empire Genomics' founder and CSO. "The collaboration with Reprogenetics has allowed us to optimize this technique and expand the abilities to detect other microdeletion occurrences."

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The abstract, entitled "Comprehensive Aneuploidy Screening in Single Cells Using Microarray Comparative Genomic Hybridization Methods: Implications for Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis," will be presented on Wednesday, October 17th at 3:30pm. These data to be presented demonstrate reproducible genomic profiling of single cells. Trisomies were identified in chromosomes 13, 15, 16, 18 and 21, which are associated with Down's syndrome, poor fetal development and several rare conditions. Sex mismatched DNA was also identified. With this technology more aneuploidy could be identified and thus avoided compared to conventional screening techniques.

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ABOUT EMPIRE GENOMICS

Empire Genomics, based in Buffalo, New York, utilizes proprietary techniques to identify and quantify chromosomal abnormalities. Specifically the company has evolved array-based Comparative Genomic Hybridization (aCGH) by developing microarrays that utilize discrete segments of DNA generated from the RPCI BAC clones. These are of considerable diagnostic value to early stage disease detection and treatment, and streamline the process by eliminating the need to grow cells or obtain large sample amounts. The company was founded on the research experience of Dr. Norma Nowak and her more than 100 peer reviewed research publications. More information on Empire Genomics is available at www.empiregenomics.com.

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ABOUT REPROGENETICS

Reprogenetics was established in 2000 as a private genetics laboratory specializing in Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD). The company currently has two stand-alone laboratories, in Livingston, NJ and South San Francisco, CA, offering state-of-the-art PGD services to reproductive medicine programs in the U.S. and Canada. Abroad Reprogenetics has laboratories in Barcelona, Spain; Kobe, Japan and Lima, Peru.

The members of the founding team are pioneers in the study of PGD, and have contributed to the field since 1990. Reprogenetics was the first to develop PGD tests for aneuploidy and translocations. The company's program director, Santiago Munne, the research director, Dr. Jacques Cohen, and their team of scientists have published more than 150 scientific articles related to PGD.

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