

## News Release

March 18, 2009

### **Merck Serono and Fast Forward, LLC Announce Collaboration to Accelerate Development of Treatments for Multiple Sclerosis**

- **Merck Serono and Fast Forward agree to work together to speed research and development on a select group of high potential MS research projects with support of up to \$19 million in funding**

Geneva, Switzerland, March 18, 2009 – Merck Serono, a division of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt Germany, and Fast Forward, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the American National Multiple Sclerosis Society, today announced a collaborative partnership to evaluate and fund promising multiple sclerosis (MS) research projects. Proposals will be jointly developed by Merck Serono and Fast Forward. Merck KGaA will provide up to \$19 million in funding. The funds will support early stage clinical development projects with biotech companies or projects with individual researchers or academic institutions.

To speed MS research and clinical development the companies have entered into a two-year worldwide agreement that may extend for an additional three years.

“Merck Serono and the American National Multiple Sclerosis Society have an unwavering commitment to the support of early stage research in the quest to find new and improved treatment options for MS patients. It is with great excitement that our organization supports this initiative with Fast Forward, which will explore new avenues to advance new MS treatments with the potential to transform people’s lives,” said Fereydoun Firouz, President and CEO of EMD Serono Inc. in the USA.



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Fast Forward, LLC was established by the American National Multiple Sclerosis Society to help bridge the gap between research and drug development. To accomplish this goal, Fast Forward partners with early stage biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to advance therapies, diagnostics, medical devices, and related technologies to treat, reverse, and ultimately cure MS. Fast Forward is committed to deploying its resources to spur development of innovative MS therapies and bring them to market as quickly as possible.

“Thanks to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s history of supporting MS research and program services for people with MS, we have tremendous knowledge about MS and the needs of people with MS. Yet the ability of research institutions and business to bring projects forward is lagging, particularly in this uncertain economic climate,” said Dr. Tim Coetzee, Fast Forward’s Executive Director. “Partnerships with industry leaders like Merck Serono equip us to move even more aggressively toward our shared goal of a world free of MS.”

“Identification of innovative opportunities to change the MS treatment paradigm is a critical aspect of addressing this disease. We are pleased to bring to this alliance not only its financial support, but our years of expertise and commitment in the field of MS research and development,” said Bernhard Kirschbaum, PhD, Executive Vice President, Global Research and Development, Merck Serono.

The *Early Stage Commercial Company Fund* and the *Innovation Accelerator Fund*, the two programs in the Merck Serono collaboration, complement Fast Forward’s ongoing efforts to spur early-stage drug discovery for MS. Both programs will provide critical resources to underfunded stages of the drug development process and align with Fast Forward’s strategy to identify the most promising drug discovery research and accelerate the drug development process by providing financial resources to move it forward.



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Fast Forward will disseminate requests for proposals (RFPs) in Q2 2009 with initial funding of proposals anticipated by December 2009. The overall selection of program awardees will be made exclusively by Fast Forward, with participation by Merck Serono under Fast Forward's standard assessment process. The priority areas to be selected for development partnership will be determined by a joint committee comprising Fast Forward staff and representatives from Merck Serono. All funding disbursements will be managed and approved by the Fast Forward Board of Directors.

### **About multiple sclerosis**

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, inflammatory condition of the central nervous system and is the most common, non-traumatic, disabling neurological disease in young adults. It is estimated that more than 2 million people have MS worldwide. While symptoms can vary, the most common symptoms of MS include blurred vision, numbness or tingling in the limbs and problems with strength and coordination. The relapsing forms of MS are the most common.

### **About Fast Forward, LLC**

Fast Forward, LLC is a nonprofit organization established by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in order to accelerate the development of treatments for MS. Fast Forward will accomplish its mission by connecting university-based MS research with private-sector drug development and by funding small biotechnology/pharmaceutical companies to develop innovative new MS therapies and repurpose FDA-approved drugs as new treatments for MS. For more information visit [www.fastforward.org](http://www.fastforward.org)

### **About the National Multiple Sclerosis Society**

The National MS Society addresses the challenges of each person affected by MS through funding cutting-edge research, driving change through advocacy, facilitating professional education, collaborating with MS organizations around the world, and providing programs and services designed to help people with MS and their families move their lives forward. In 2008 alone, through the national office and its 500-state network of chapters, the Society devoted over \$136 million to programs that enhanced more than one million lives. The Society also invested nearly \$50 million to support 440 research projects around the world. The Society is dedicated to achieving a world free of MS. Join the movement at [www.nationalMSSociety.org](http://www.nationalMSSociety.org).

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### About Merck Serono

Merck Serono is the division for innovative prescription pharmaceuticals of Merck, a global pharmaceutical and chemical group. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, Merck Serono discovers, develops, manufactures and markets innovative small molecules and biopharmaceuticals to help patients with unmet medical needs. Its North American business operates in the United States and Canada as EMD Serono.

Merck Serono has leading brands serving patients with cancer (Erbitux®, cetuximab), multiple sclerosis (Rebif®, interferon beta-1a), infertility (Gonal-f®, follitropin alfa), endocrine and cardiometabolic disorders (Glucophage®, metformin); (Concor®, bisoprolol); (Euthyrox®, levothyroxine); (Saizen® and Serostim®, somatropin). Not all products are available in all markets.

With an annual R&D expenditure of around € 1bn, Merck Serono is committed to growing its business in specialist-focused therapeutic areas including neurodegenerative diseases, oncology, fertility and endocrinology, as well as new areas potentially arising out of research and development in autoimmune and inflammatory diseases.

### About Merck

Merck is a global pharmaceutical and chemical company with total revenues of € 7.6 billion in 2008, a history that began in 1668, and a future shaped by 32,800 employees in 59 countries. Its success is characterized by innovations from entrepreneurial employees. Merck's operating activities come under the umbrella of Merck KGaA, in which the Merck family holds an approximately 70% interest and free shareholders own the remaining approximately 30%. In 1917 the U.S. subsidiary Merck & Co. was expropriated and has been an independent company ever since.

For more information, please visit [www.merckserono.com](http://www.merckserono.com) or [www.merck.de](http://www.merck.de)