Media release / for immediate release

A new era in treatments of autoimmune diseases and clinical trials: Two spin-offs kicked by CHF 130.000 each

St.Gallen/Zurich/Lausanne, June 2, 2015 – Two great biotech startups, Polyneuron Pharmaceuticals from University of Basel and CellSpring from ETH Zurich, raised CHF 130.000 each by winning the third and last round of Venture Kick. Both spin-offs are starting a new era in treatments of autoimmune diseases and clinical trials.

When a person is affected by an infection, the body creates specialized immune cells and antibodies that attack foreign infectious agents. In the case of autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis or Crohn’s disease, there is an abnormal response of the body’s immune system towards self-tissues. This involves an overproduction of pathogenic auto-antibodies causing inflammation and tissue destruction. Current immunosuppressive drugs unselectively suppress the immune system, frequently leading to serious therapy side effects that are an intolerable burden to many patients.

Urgent medical need for effective and safe therapies
The University of Basel spin-off Polyneuron Pharmaceuticals is developing a groundbreaking drug class for the treatment of autoimmune disorders. Their technology platform “Antibody-Catch®” enables the design of drugs that selectively inactivate disease-causing autoantibodies, while leaving the immune system intact. This pioneering therapeutic approach holds great potential for effective and safe treatments for antibody-mediated autoimmune diseases. “Polyneuron strives to make Antibody-Catch® a clinical reality and hopes to make a difference of people’s lives suffering from autoimmune diseases. With Venture Kick our startup can take an important step towards the realization of improved treatments for autoimmune diseases”, says CEO Dr. Ruben Herrendorff.

The next level in 3D cell culture
Bringing a new drug to market costs between 1-2 billion CHF and takes over a decade to complete. For the last half-century, pharma companies and academic labs have relied on 2-dimensional cell structures to test potential new medicines. That is changing rapidly now as researchers observe more and more that cells grown in 3D structures mimic human organs and tumors much more closely. The two founders of CellSpring, Dr. Chris Millan and Kramer Schmidt, have devised a faster, more cost-effective method for developing 3D cell structures than current products to test medication. The innovation enables more reliable and earlier “stop/go” decision making in the drug development timeline. CellSpring’s vision is to reduce the number of drugs that fail during clinical testing and to reduce the number of animals needed for preclinical drug screening. But CTO Dr. Chris Millan knows that great innovation is not enough: “We are talking about bringing change to the highly standardized and regulated drug development process. Our 3D cell culture models will need to be rigorously validated before they are widely accepted in the industry. That’s our focus now and with the great support of Venture Kick we are up for the challenge!”
Links
Polyneuron Pharmaceutical and CellSpring are members of the Swiss national startup team 2015, the venture leaders, and will travel to Boston and New York on June 9th for a 10 days entrepreneurial business development trip: Watch the presentation video of Ruben Herrendorff and Chris Millan. Learn more about the Swiss national startup team 2015 here.

About Venture Kick
Since the launch of Venture Kick, an initiative of the Venture Kick Foundation, in 2007 375 project teams have benefited from the overall support of CHF 14.85 million. The program has contributed to the creation of 3.038 new jobs for highly qualified people and to a financing volume of CHF 602 million. 58 of the actual «TOP 100 Swiss Startups» started with Venture Kick. Eight are even in the top 10: InSphero, L.E.S.S., Abionic, HouseTrip, QualySense, Bcomp, Climeworks and Dacuda. These results show that the Venture Kick approach creates a great benefit for the Swiss economy and its workplace.

Double the number of spin-offs
The mission of Venture Kick is the early identification, structuring and promotion of promising business ideas with a clear vision: To double the number of spin-offs at Swiss universities and to raise the attractiveness of these young companies for Swiss and international investors. Thanks to Venture Kick, startups learn how to win customers and convince investors more rapidly. They benefit from hands-on execution boot camps (the kickers camps) and from quick access to extensive business networks. The program is open to young talents with innovative business ideas, who have not yet founded their company and are still enrolled or employed at Swiss institutions of higher learning: students, postgraduates, researchers and professors.

Venture Kick is highly competitive. Each month, eight projects get the chance to present themselves to a jury. The four most promising then receive CHF 10.000 and qualify for the second round held three months later, where the two best teams receive another CHF 20.000 each. In the third and final round, taking place six months later, the winner is granted CHF 100.000.

Venture Kick, an initiative of the Venture Kick Foundation, has been financed so far by Gebert Rüf Stiftung, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Avina Stiftung, OPO-Stiftung, Fondation Lombard Odier, Debiopharm Group, André Hoffmann and Hansjörg Wyss. www.venturekick.ch

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The following selected startups have been supported by Venture Kick:

- Abionic SA, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.abionic.com
- ActLight SA, EPF Lausanne (Cleantech), www.act-light.com
- Aeon Scientific AG, ETH Zurich (Medtech), www.aeon-scientific.com
- Aïducation International, ETH Zurich (Others), www.aiducation.org
- Aleva Neurotherapeutics SA, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.aleva-neuro.com
- Attolight SA, EPF Lausanne (Micro-, Nano Technology), www.attolight.com
- Bcomp AG, HEG-FR - Haute école de Gestion (Cleantech), www.bcomp.ch
- BioVersys AG, ETH Zurich (Biotech), www.bioversys.com
- CALCISCO AG, Uni Bern (Biotech), www.calcisco.com
- CashSentinel SA, IMD Lausanne (Internet, Mobile), www.cashsentinel.com
  - CashSentinel signs a partnership with AutoScout
- Climeworks AG, ETH Zurich (Cleantech), www.climeworks.com
- Composyt Light Labs SA, EPF Lausanne (Micro-, Nano Technology), www.composyt.com
  - Composyt Light Labs SA acquired by Intel Corporation
- Compliant Concept AG, ETH Zurich (Medtech), www.compliant-concept.ch
- Dacuda AG, ETH Zurich (Internet, Mobile), www.dacuda.com
- DistalMotion SA, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.distalmotion.com
- eSMART Technologies Sàrl, EPF Lausanne (Cleantech), www.myesmart.ch
- Fastree 3D SA, EPF Lausanne (Electronics, Mechanics), www.aqua.epfl.ch
- Geosatis SA, EPF Lausanne (Electronics, Mechanics), www.geo-satis.com
- greenTEG AG, ETH Zurich (Cleantech), www.greeneg.com
- Flyability SA, EPF Lausanne (Robotics), www.flyability.com
- G-Therapeutics, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.gtherapeutics.com
- HouseTrip SA, EHL - Ecole Hoteliere (Internet, Mobile), www.housetrip.com
- InSphero AG, Uni Zurich (Biotech), www.insphero.com
- Jilion SA, EPF Lausanne (Software), www.jilion.com
- Kandou Bus SA, EPF Lausanne (Cleantech), www.kandou.com
- KeyLemon SA, HES-SO Valais (Software), www.keylemon.com
- Koring GmbH, Uni Basel (Medtech), www.koring.ch
- L.E.S.S. - Light Efficient System SA, EPF Lausanne (Cleantech), www.less-optics.com
- Lemoptix SA, EPF Lausanne (Micro-, Nano Technology), www.lemoptix.com
  - Lemoptix SA acquired by Intel Corporation
- Lunaphore Technologies SA, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.lunaphore.com
- MindMaze SA, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.mindmaze.com
- Nanolive SA, EPF Lausanne (Biotech), www.nanolive.ch
  - Nanolive wins Pionierpreis
- noonee AG, ETH Zurich (Medtech), www.noonee.ch
  - Audi to test noonee’s Chairless Chair prototype
- Optotune AG, ETH Zurich (Micro-, Nano Technology), www.optotune.com
- PB&B SA, Uni Genève (Biotech), www.pbtech.ch
- Pix4D SA, EPF Lausanne (Software), www.pix4d.com
- Poken SA, IMD Lausanne (Internet, Mobile), www.doyoupoken.com
- QGel SA, EPF Lausanne (Biotech), www.qgelbio.com
- QualySense AG, Uni Zurich (Micro-, Nano Technology), www.qualysense.com
- Relish Brothers GmbH, HSLU - Hochschule Luzern (Others), www.relishguitars.ch
- **RealLook AG (Selfnation)**, ETH Zurich (Internet, Mobile), [www.selfnation.ch](http://www.selfnation.ch)
- **ScanTrust SA**, EPF Lausanne (Software), [www.scantrust.com](http://www.scantrust.com)
- **senseFly SA**, EPF Lausanne (Electronics, Mechanics), [www.sensefly.com](http://www.sensefly.com)
- **SwissLeg Sagl**, Università della Svizzera italiana (Medtech), [www.swissleg.com](http://www.swissleg.com)
- **SwissLitho AG**, ETH Zurich (Micro-, Nano Technology), [www.swisslitho.com](http://www.swisslitho.com)
- **Typesafe**, EPF Lausanne (Software), [www.typesafe.com](http://www.typesafe.com)
- **Uepaa AG**, FHNW - Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz (Internet, Mobile), [www.uepaa.ch](http://www.uepaa.ch)
- **UrbanAlps AG**, ETH Zurich (Electronics, Mechanics), [www.urbanalps.com](http://www.urbanalps.com)
- **Upicto Sàrl**, ETH Zurich (Software), [www.upicto.com](http://www.upicto.com)
  - Logitech buys Upicto (March 2015)
- **UrbanFarmers AG**, ZHAW (Cleantech), [www.urbanfarmers.ch](http://www.urbanfarmers.ch)

See the complete list of VENTURE KICK startups [here](http://www.selfnation.ch).

Stay tuned with the successes of Venture Kick alumni on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com), [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com) and [LinkedIn](http://www.linkedin.com).