Clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company, Soligenix, Inc. (NJ, USA), announced that the US Patent Office has granted patent 8,444,991, entitled, 'Method of preparing an immunologically-active adjuvant-bound dried vaccine composition'. The patent’s claims encompass composition-of-matter and method claims for ThermoVax™, a vaccine-stabilization technology developed at the University of Colorado (CO, USA) and exclusively licensed to Soligenix.

Developed by researchers John Carpenter and Theodore Randolph, the method overcomes the problems associated with freeze-drying vaccines containing aluminum adjuvants while attempting to engineer them to withstand extremes of temperature. The ThermoVax™ method is novel in that it eliminates the need for cold-chain production, transportation and storage of alum-adjuvanted vaccines by rendering the salt stable at elevated temperatures.

According to Christopher Schaber, President and Chief Executive Officer of Soligenix, “The granting of the thermostabilization patent is a significant milestone for the ThermoVax™ program and is a critical component in our commercialization strategy for vaccines that can avoid the increased costs and logistical burdens associated with cold chain storage and distribution.” It is reported that a high proportion of vaccine doses are wasted due to destruction as a result of leaving cold-chain temperature ranges.

Schaber continued, “We expect that the introduction of an effective technology for long-term stabilization of vaccines has the potential to be a major advance in the national effort to develop effective countermeasures and therapies for significant biothreats and emerging pathogens. We have initiated discussions with a number of vaccine companies and non-profit organizations regarding the potential for collaboration on heat-stable versions of their vaccine candidates.” The technology is being developed with financial support from the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases under cooperative grant agreement U01 AI 082210.

A portfolio of more than 400 patents is being put up for sale by the bankruptcy administrators of NanoInk (IL, USA), whose products include nanoscale technologies with applications in pharmaceutical science. After shareholders withdrew investment, the patents were offered up for sale along with other assets such as equipment, inventory and licenses to third-party technology.

The patents, which cover jurisdictions such as the US, Japan, China and Europe, can be acquired in a single package or in various lots. News website, AzoNano.com regards the sale as one of a kind, claiming “It is unlikely that any similar collection of equipment and IP will come to market in the foreseeable future.”

It remains unclear whether the patents will be able to generate the necessary major interest from prospective buyers. Deals such as ARM and AST’s acquisition of MIPS’ patents appear to have been motivated by the desire to keep assets away from competitors that may try to assert them against the eventual buyers at a later stage.

Law firm McDermott Will & Emery recently conducted a study into patenting in the nanotechnology industry. The research found that published nanotech patent applications in the USA had grown by approximately 150% between 2006 and 2011, while grants in the space almost doubled over the same time period. The study also found that some of the largest IP-holding organizations, such as Samsung and IBM, were already the leading holders of patents in the field in the USA.

The surge in investment in nanotechnology from industry leaders suggests that there may be opportunities for licensing, assertion and sale within the field. Although the NanoInk patents are specific in relation to authentication and security, they could have significant potential if they are well drafted and have extensive applications beyond their original intention.

Vermont Governor passes law to protect against patent trolling

Patent trolls, those who abuse the pharmaceutical patent system by making deceptive claims of infringement in a bid to extort money, will now be prevented from their practice under a new measure passed by Peter Shumlin, Governor of Vermont (VT, USA).

The first of its kind in the US, the new law is designed to protect companies and will allow courts to pass judgment on whether a claim is deceptive, specifying factors that could be used as evidence as well as providing damages to companies in Vermont that have been forced to pay wrongful settlements.

Speaking about the new measure, The Governor said, “This bill will help to protect our good Vermont businesses from unscrupulous patent trolls who take advantage of them through bad faith claims of patent infringement. It will help us grow jobs.” Under the act it will also be possible for the Attorney General to conduct civil investigations and bring civil action against violators.

Acknowledging that the law is the first of its kind, President of the American IP Law Association, Jeffrey Lewis said, “It’s, as far as we can tell, a novel approach for states to try to do, this sort of bootstrapping, if you will, of the unfair competition laws to try to address patent assertions.”

In accordance with the new law, the state recently filed a patent-trolling lawsuit against a Delaware-based company, suing MPHJ Technology Investments (NC, USA) and its subsidiary companies operating in Vermont. It was alleged that MPHJ had a patent relating to the scanning of documents and their attachment via email, and that MPHJ were sending threatening letters to small businesses in Vermont. Bryan Farney, an attorney for MPHJ, said that the company was aware of investigation under the Attorney General and stopped its activities in Vermont during the review, he said of the investigation, “We think that we are attempting as best we can to legitimately identify people who are using the client technology, which has been admitted and issued by the U.S. Patent office and try to figure a reasonable licensing fee from them.”

Eric Goldman, Professor of IP Law at Santa Clara University (CA, USA) is unsure whether a state has the authority to regulate such matters, “We’re not sure if states can even have a voice in the matter, so there’s a question about whether the law will even stand. But that’s part of why this is such a novel approach.”


 Parkinson’s disease new product entries set to boost market, claims report

Intelligence business provider GBI research (NY, USA) has recently published a report detailing the development of a highly dynamic market in the field of neurodegenerative diseases in the coming years. The report also outlines expectations in regard to numbers of patent expiries and new drug approvals.

According to the report it is expected that the Alzheimer’s disease market will decline, reflecting the lack of major developments in recent years and the looming expiration of patents on several key products. In contrast, the Parkinson’s disease market is predicted to grow as expensive products such as Duodopa, manufactured by Abbott Laboratories (IL, USA), are patent approved in the USA. It is also expected that the aging populations of the developed world will increase the number of patients requiring treatment for such diseases.

Also assessed in the report were the treatment-usage patterns, pipeline analysis, market characterization and the licensing deal trends in Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and Huntington’s disease. The current therapeutic environment in the treatment of the diseases across the top seven developed markets was also detailed. The report aims to aid businesses in the strategizing of product launches by allowing them to grasp the competitive environment, understand the impact of major patent expiries and assess the potential impact of current late-stage pipeline molecules for neurodegenerative disease.


– All news stories written by Phoebe Heseltine.