



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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717-APTAGEN

CDC Awards Aptagen \$1MM Contract for Parasitic Disease Diagnostic

December, 2019 (Jacobus, PA) – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded a 2-year, \$988,300 SBIR contract to Aptagen, LLC to develop an aptamer (chemical antibody) based diagnostic for human carriers of the pork tapeworm, *Taenia solium* (*T. solium*). This diagnostic will be used to help prevent Neurocysticercosis (NCC), the leading cause of adult onset epilepsy in the developing world.

Cysticercosis is an infection caused by eating undercooked pork or drinking contaminated water containing *T. solium* eggs. In humans, these eggs can pass through the intestines into tissues, forming cysts. NCC occurs when those cysts form in the brain, and can cause severe neurological problems. There are 50 million total cases of *T. solium* leading to an estimated 50,000 deaths a year from NCC. With increasing NCC cases in the US and Canada due to globalization, the need for a low-cost rapid test is growing.

It is critical to quickly identify infected parties because humans are the primary carriers of *T. solium* and can unknowingly transmit the infection. Developing an effective field-capable test to identify the taeniasis coproantigen will support the effort to control and eliminate *T. solium*, thereby reducing the burden of epilepsy.

President & CEO, G. Thomas Caltagirone, Ph.D. said, “We delivered promising results for a Phase I preliminary study, and were invited to continue the investigation into a Phase II development of the aptamer-based assay. We look forward to working with the CDC to deliver a field-ready test.”

Aptagen, LLC is a global leader in aptamer development with more than 25 years of experience generating high-affinity and specifically binding aptamers for small molecules, proteins, cells, and tissues. The company produces state-of-the-art target-recognition elements for diagnostics, therapeutics, and bio-industrial applications. Learn more at www.aptagen.com

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