

Press Release

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Better infection diagnostics through spin-off at BNITM

(Ex-)employees found start-up "Panadea Diagnostics"

Hamburg, 28 March 2023 - Scientists with entrepreneurial spirit: Researchers at the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine (BNITM) have developed and patented a special technology for antibody detection, which will be marketed from April by a company founded specifically for this purpose. The board of the BNITM and Panadea Diagnostics GmbH have signed a corresponding licence and cooperation agreement.

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has made it clear: good tests are needed to diagnose and monitor emerging and tropical infectious agents. But the market is difficult to predict and therefore not attractive enough for many manufacturers and investors. Yet the need in the countries of the Global South and in tropical medical research is enormous. Moreover, the few existing tests are often not sufficiently sensitive or specific.

In close collaboration with research groups at BNITM and partner institutions in endemic countries, BNITM staff have developed and brought to market highly sensitive and specific antibody tests for four diseases prioritised by the World Health Organization (WHO): for Zika, Lassa and Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fevers and COVID-19. They are based on a patented technology that enables the development of test systems with outstanding performance characteristics.

The licence and cooperation agreement signed today enables Panadea to exclusively use the BNITM patents and regulates the further cooperation between the spin-off and the institute. The medium-term goal is to improve the availability of reliable testing methods, especially for poverty-related tropical diseases prioritised by the WHO. Panadea is targeting customers from international infection research as well as diagnostic laboratories in endemic areas.

Katharina Fegebank, Minister for Science, Research, Equalities and Districts: "Top-class research is being carried out in our research institutions - when these innovations are transformed into new companies, this is a great success for Hamburg as a location for science and business. I warmly congratulate the BNITM on the spin-off of Panadea! The company is the successful result of a transfer process over many years, which the science authority has supported intensively. The company is an excellent example of how research ideas can become innovations. With its business idea, Panadea is making an important contribution to improving the diagnosis of tropical diseases and thus contributing to better medical care, especially in the countries of the Global South."

Prof. Dr. Jürgen May, Chairman of the Board of BNITM: "Our Institute has always focused on the development and implementation of innovative diagnostic methods for tropical and emerging infectious diseases. It is a great success that employees of ours can now set up their own company. This will make it possible to distribute the improved tests worldwide and to develop new tests. I would like to thank the Ministry and TuTech Innovation GmbH for their active advisory support."

Dr Yang Liu, Managing Director of Panadea Diagnostics GmbH: "At Panadea, we are convinced that the high-quality products we have developed in collaboration with BNITM will make a significant contribution to

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meeting the great need for reliable tests to monitor high-risk infectious diseases and thus prevent future outbreaks and epidemics. The signing of the licensing and collaboration agreement represents an essential milestone for us on this journey to which we are deeply committed. We are honoured to be able to use the patented technology in collaboration with BNITM to develop and deliver reliable tests."

Panadea *Diagnostics* GmbH is the result of a development process lasting more than ten years. It began with the *Diagnostics Development Laboratory* (DDL), which was funded by the European Regional Development Fund from 2011 to 2015. Later, DDL received support from the funding programmes "EXIST Forschungstransfer" (2016-2018) and "WIPANO Wissens- und Technologietransfer" (2019-2021) of the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi). Panadea *Diagnostics* GmbH has since successfully raised private investor funds.

Since 2014, BNITM has been a member of a Hamburg transfer network of university and non-university institutions, which is supervised by the agency TuTech Innovation GmbH and funded by the BMWi and BWFGF. The common goal is to improve the economic exploitation and protection of inventions from public research.