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Press Release

ANTISENSE PHARMA Receives EMEA Orphan Drug Status for AP 12009 in High-Grade Glioma

REGENSBURG, GERMANY - April 15, 2002. Antisense Pharma GmbH announced today that it has received orphan drug designation from the Commission of the European Communities for AP 12009 in the treatment of high-grade glioma.

Orphan drug designation can be applied for in the EU if the disease is life-threatening or debilitating and affects not more than five in 10,000 persons in the European Community, in case that no other satisfactory method exists or the medicinal product provides significant benefit.

"We are pleased to announce the orphan drug status for the European Union, which accelerates our efforts to rapidly develop and commercialize AP 12009" said Dr. Karl-Hermann Schlingensiepen, Chief Executive Officer of Antisense Pharma. "High-grade glioma is one of the most aggressive and devastating cancers. Despite various therapeutic approaches including surgery, radio- and chemotherapy, the prognosis for the patients remains poor. We expect AP 12009 to significantly improve the therapeutic outcome of glioma patients as well as being better tolerated than standard therapy."

AP 12009 is a specific antisense inhibitor of TGF- β 2 protein production. TGF- β is the most potent immunosuppressor known and plays a key role in tumor progression. Secretion of high levels of TGF- β by the tumor cells prevents the host immune system from recognizing and destroying the tumor cells. Inhibition of TGF- β production with AP 12009 reverts the immunosuppressive effects and enables the immune system to recognize the tumor cells and to destroy them.

"In ongoing Phase I/II clinical trials in patients with recurrent, inoperable high-grade gliomas AP 12009 shows excellent local safety and tolerability" explains Dr. Gerhard Stauder, Chief Scientific Officer of Antisense Pharma.

High-grade glioma is the first indication for which Antisense Pharma clinically develops AP 12009. In a variety of other cancer types elevated TGF- β plasma levels are correlated with malignancy, invasiveness and poor clinical prognosis. Thus, Antisense Pharma's inhibitors of TGF- β have a great potential for the treatment of a variety of cancer indications.

Antisense therapy is one of the most promising novel approaches for the treatment of malignant diseases. It has proven its potential in a number of clinical trials in recent years showing high efficacy and only few side effects. Antisense Pharma is a German biotechnology company with a broad expertise in both antisense technology and oncology. AP 12009 is the most advanced in a portfolio of products.