



## BIO 2006 yields results for Wisconsin companies

Jill Carlson

It's been six months since Wisconsin wowed the world at BIO 2006 in Chicago, and Capital Region biotech firms are reporting success in forming partnerships with potential collaborators and investors from contacts made at the conference.

One of the Capital Region attendees, Quincy Bioscience -- a biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery, development and commercialization of novel medicines to treat the diseases of aging -- caught the attention of Business Week magazine with its BIO 2006 presentation about aequorin, a protein from jellyfish.

The resulting article in the June 5 issue of Business Week's "SciTech Developments to Watch" column cited the work that Quincy Bioscience is doing with UW-Milwaukee assistant professor James Moyer Jr. to research aequorin and its potential applications.

Brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's disease are a result of the loss of calcium-binding proteins that protect nerve cells as people age, and aequorin could be used to control levels of calcium in the brain and work to prevent these diseases.

Mark Underwood, president of Quincy, said attending BIO 2006 not only brought attention to his company but also helped to put the company on the map with other biotech companies and investors. "We go together to represent the state and share ideas. Working as a group is remarkable; we all gain by becoming attractive to investors and potential partners. It's an important crossroads of the industry from around the world to meet representatives just two hours away,"

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Sixteen Wisconsin organizations conducted presentations about their research and their companies in "The Discovery Theater," located in the Wisconsin Pavilion at BIO 2006 in Chicago. (FORWARD WISCONSIN)

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Jellyfish contain a protein called aequorin, which could help to prevent diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's. (QUINCY BIOSCIENCE)

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he said.

Underwood added that Quincy Bioscience, which is located in University Research Park on Madison's West Side, is in talks with other pharmaceutical companies for possible partnerships and is in negotiations with a potential licensing partner in China. Negotiations to collaborate with other UW locations are also in the works.

James Moyer, left, assistant professor in the department of psychology at UW-Milwaukee, and Mark Underwood, president of Quincy Bioscience, are working on research involving aequorin, a luminescent protein from jellyfish.  
(QUINCY BIOSCIENCE)

BIO 2006 gave Wisconsin an opportunity to shine in the eyes of the biotech world domestically and internationally.

"The bioscience field industry has grown to a \$7.5 billion industry in Wisconsin, and a critical element of its continued growth will be the development of the international marketplace. Our association has used what we have learned at BIO to arrange for briefings from reps from Great Britain, China, Brazil, Canada, Germany and Japan and will arrange a video conference connection soon with Taiwan," said Jim Leonhart, executive vice president of Wisconsin Biotechnology and Medical Device Association.

Gov. Jim Doyle accompanied more than 300 representatives of Wisconsin's biotech industry to the four-day BIO 2006 conference, which brings together representatives from health, food, agriculture, industrial and environmental biotechnology companies to present innovations to cure and prevent disease, alleviate hunger and improve the environment.

The Wisconsin Pavilion, 1600 square feet of exhibition space, was the largest the state has ever had at BIO and highlighted groundbreaking research at Wisconsin universities, the Bio-medical Technology Alliance of Southeastern Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation and other Wisconsin biotech companies and institutions. Sixteen Wisconsin organizations conducted presentations about their research and their companies in "The Discovery Theater," located in the pavilion.

"Our companies got great exposure in the Wisconsin Pavilion. Wisconsin was noticed as a player on the world stage. Many of the nearly 20,000 attendees are aware of our research prowess and are now seeing that companies and jobs are emerging from it. We more than doubled our previous BIO budget and it resulted in Wisconsin presenting its most professional 'bio-face' ever," Leonhart said.

Leonhart noted that Neoclone, a Madison company that produces monoclonal antibody products for biotechnology and research markets, is close to completing a deal with a German company to be announced soon. Neoclone has established relationships with companies in New Zealand and Australia by attending previous BIO conferences.

Companies could arrange meetings with representatives of companies with whom they are seeking a possible partnership at the conference's Business Partnering Forum. "We had 30 bio-tech companies attend BIO 2006 and they averaged 10 partnering sessions each. This is a place where our companies can actually meet 'face-to face' with senior officials from companies from around the world. Nearly 75 percent of our biotech companies have or are working to establish sales activity in other countries," Leonhart said.

Another BIO participant from the Capital Region was the Waisman Clinical BioManufacturing Facility, which met with a consultant who was representing two biotech companies and began discussions for possible partnerships.

John Keach, business development manager at Waisman, said the BIO conference is the best place to get an overview of projects and new technologies in the biotech industry as well as make connections in other states and countries. "We have some anti-cancer projects on which we are collaborating with companies based in California, Texas and Vancouver. We are also working with companies in Boston and Australia on whole-cell vaccines," Keach explained. The Waisman Clinical BioManufacturing Facility in Madison has made significant contributions to genetics and molecular biology for the prevention of adult neurological disorders and adult-onset diseases.

Representatives from Madison-based EraGen -- a venture-backed company that designs, develops, manufactures and markets molecular diagnostic testing products -- held discussions with the Centers for Disease Control and other companies while at BIO 2006. The discussions were regarding EraGen's involvement in the areas of biodefense and pathogen research on diseases such as avian flu and anthrax. "In my experience it is the best trade conference for keeping up to date on biotechnology. There have been significant changes in the market in recent years, and the BIO organization has kept up with them, especially in the area of molecular diagnostics," said James Prudent, EraGen CSO.

"This year was a phenomenal experience for the state, with the governor's delegation and reception, which continues to enhance our global presence in the growing biotechnology market," said Irene Hrusovsky, EraGen president and CEO.

"This conference is a great venue for establishing relationships with newer companies -- companies whose expertise can advance automation or lead us to new developments that bridge the gap between diagnostics and drug therapy in the area of personalized medicine," said Regina Reynolds, director of corporate communications at EraGen. "The commercial contacts from conferences like this yield longer-term market penetration. Meetings

with existing EraGen business partners such as Luminex, a Texas-based biotech firm which develops biological testing technologies, will help to fuel the growth of the company."

EraGen received the Innovation Award, presented by BIO, for its poster titled "Expanding Molecular Diagnostics."

Forward Wisconsin, the state marketing and business recruitment organization, conducted a post-event evaluation of Wisconsin BIO 2006 attendees in which respondents stated that their top objectives for attending were to meet potential partners, network with industry colleagues, conduct market research and expand existing business. One of the respondents said the company had established six solid leads that will likely lead to collaboration and or sales. Another respondent said that the company cemented its credibility with established accounts by gaining exposure and increasing awareness.

2006 was the first year the conference was held in the Midwest in its 13-year history. According to Kim Coghill of the Biotechnology Industry Organization, a record 19,479 people attended the conference, representing 62 countries. About one-third of the attendees were international participants from the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Australia, Japan and South Korea.

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