



For Immediate Release
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Tasso, Ceres Nanosciences, George Mason University, and the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases receive \$4.25M to develop a universal surveillance platform for infectious disease outbreaks

MANASSAS, Va. — September 28, 2017 — Tasso, Inc. (Tasso), Ceres Nanosciences (Ceres), George Mason University (Mason), and the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) today announced the commencement of an \$11.7 million program, funded by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), to develop a reliable, safe, and simple universal surveillance platform for infectious disease outbreaks.

During this multi-year program, which will be initiated with \$4.25 million in funding from DTRA, Ceres will integrate its Nanotrap® particle technology, which can capture, concentrate, and preserve pathogens and other biomolecules, into Tasso's HemoLink™ device for simple and painless collection of large-volume capillary blood samples in remote environments.

Tasso and Ceres will work in close collaboration with infectious disease experts and advanced biodefense laboratories at Mason and USAMRIID to develop an effective disease surveillance platform that can be rapidly deployed in the field, operated by untrained users, and improve early response. The platform will combine the Nanotrap® and HemoLink™ technologies to safely and reproducibly collect, preserve, and transport blood-borne pathogens.

“Infectious diseases remain one of the main causes of death worldwide and a significant threat to national security,” said Dr. Kylee Kehn-Hall of Mason. “In just the last five years, for example, epidemics of Ebola, Chikungunya, and Zika viruses, usually restricted to tropical climates, have reached the United States.”

“When a new outbreak occurs, public health officials quickly need as much information as possible about the pathogen(s) causing the outbreak to determine how to control it,” said Dr. Louis Altamura of USAMRIID. “Analyzing clinical samples from infected patients is one of the best ways to get that information, but existing blood sample collection and screening methods can expose healthcare workers and laboratory technicians to pathogens, presenting safety concerns for these workers and potentially contributing to the spread of the epidemic.”

“We have demonstrated already that Nanotrap® particles can be used to enrich pathogens like influenza from biological samples and stabilize them for improved downstream analysis,” said Ben Lepene, CTO of Ceres Nanosciences. “We’re very excited to work with Tasso, Mason, and

USAMRIID to apply that same approach to enrich and stabilize from blood a wide range of host biomarkers along with viral and bacterial pathogens that represent a risk to the U.S. Department of Defense.”

“There is an urgent need for an easier way to reach people in rural or hard-to-reach environments to provide health experts with the information they need to make effective decisions in a timely manner. Integrating the Nanotrap® particle technology and the simple HemoLink™ blood collection technology will enable acquiring samples from populations in outbreak regions without putting phlebotomists or patients at risk or requiring burdensome logistical networks,” said Dr. Erwin Berthier, VP of R&D at Tasso. “The integrated device will be rapidly and safely deployable in any environment and will collect a large volume of capillary blood that can be shipped over long distances while retaining its clinical relevance.”

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About Tasso, Inc.

Tasso is a Seattle, WA, based startup focusing on improving healthcare and the diagnostics process by developing more accessible and convenient blood collection and shipping methods that can reach people in any location or environment. Tasso originated from technology developed in the University of Wisconsin-Madison and assembles a highly qualified team of biomedical engineers, hematology researchers, human-factor designers, and clinical experts that have successfully developed the HemoLink. The HemoLink was developed with funding from the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Tasso is an open and collaborative company that focuses on working with leading technological and clinical partners to deliver reliable and disruptive diagnostic innovations. Learn more at www.tassoinc.com

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About Ceres Nanosciences, Inc.

Ceres Nanosciences is a privately held company, located in Prince William County, Virginia, focused on the development of research and diagnostic products using its unique and proprietary Nanotrap® particle technology. The Nanotrap® particle technology provides powerful biomarker capture and biofluid sample processing capabilities for a wide array of diagnostic applications and sample handling needs. The Nanotrap® particle technology was invented at George Mason University and developed under funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). With support from the NIH, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Commonwealth of Virginia, Ceres is focused on incorporating this technology into a range of innovative diagnostic products. Learn more at www.ceresnano.com

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About George Mason University

George Mason University is Virginia's largest public research university. Located near Washington, D.C., Mason enrolls more than 36,000 students from 130 countries and all 50 states. Mason has grown rapidly over the past half-century and is recognized for its innovation and entrepreneurship, remarkable diversity, and commitment to accessibility. Mason is also one of the best values in higher education, producing graduates who lead all Virginia schools with the highest annual salaries. George Mason University's National Center for Biodefense and Infectious Diseases is a \$50 million, 52,000-square-foot, stand-alone, high-security facility located adjacent to GMU's Prince William Campus in Manassas, Virginia. The facility features more than 18,500 square feet of lab space comprising BSL-2 open-design laboratories with cell culture suites, preparation areas, and a microscopy room; ABSL-2 rooms, a surgery suite; BSL-3 laboratories; and ABSL-3 suites and a necropsy suite. The facility is fully approved and licensed for select agent work by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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About USAMRIID

USAMRIID's mission is to provide leading edge medical capabilities to deter and defend against current and emerging biological threat agents. Research conducted at USAMRIID leads to medical solutions—vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, and information—that benefit both military personnel and civilians. The Institute plays a key role as the lead military medical research laboratory for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Joint Science and Technology Office for Chemical and Biological Defense. USAMRIID is a subordinate laboratory of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command. For more information, visit www.usamriid.army.mil. [The information contained in this press release does not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the Government and no official endorsement should be inferred.]

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