

Press release

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Successful cooperation model

Phenion to become center of competence for skin research

After more than five years of successful research within the framework of a public-private partnership model between the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, six of its professors, and Henkel KGaA, Düsseldorf, Phenion GmbH & Co. KG is being expanded to become a leading center of competence for skin research. Phenion will be reinforced by members of Henkel's Skin Research department and will move to the Life Science Center situated at the Merowingerplatz in Düsseldorf.

Frankfurt/Düsseldorf – Founded as a public-private partnership between Henkel KGaA, the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main and six of its professors, the biotechnological research company Phenion GmbH and Co. KG is now being expanded to become a leading center of competence for skin research. This cooperation model was a pioneering venture at that time in Germany. Its objective was to efficiently translate research results into marketable products, thereby strengthening the innovative power of both partners. In the meantime, Phenion and the six Frankfurt professors, specialists in the fields of dermatology, pharmacy, microbiology and biochemistry, have developed various approaches. One of these is a complex model of the human skin, which has been so successful that it serves as a basis for new in vitro test methods to study substances that act on the skin. Henkel uses such methods to develop new products that come into contact with the skin. In vitro methods are needed worldwide, also as alternatives to animal testing, for purposes such as assuring the safety of products and raw materials.

The success of the novel cooperation model between the Frankfurt-based university and Henkel and its establishment as a leading center of competence for skin research will allow even more efficient development of new test methods and will foster an even better understanding of the molecular mechanisms involved in a variety of skin reactions. Phenion will be reinforced by Henkel researchers in the areas of molecular biology and dermatological studies and is due to move to new premises in the Life Science Center in Düsseldorf-Bilk in the fall of 2006.

To assure the successful transfer of research results from academia to industry in the future also, Phenion will continue to involve professors from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in interdisciplinary projects focusing on skin research and alternative test methods. Phenion is currently financing three doctoral thesis projects in various working groups of the Dermatology department at the University Hospital in Frankfurt to conduct fundamental research on skin and cell physiology. A

fourth research project in Frankfurt focuses on developing a cell-based alternative test method to distinguish substances that can cause irritation or allergic reactions of the skin. New national and international partnerships with working groups of universities and research institutes are currently being planned.

“In realigning Phenion, we are pursuing the successful alliance of academic and industrial research on in vitro methods. And we are creating the basis for further partnerships to drive forward research on tissue models, also with a view to providing alternatives to animal testing,” says Dr. Wolfgang Gawrisch, CTO Research/Technology of Henkel KGaA and Chairman of the Phenion Board of Directors.

Prof. Dr. Rudolf Steinberg, President of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, adds: “Phenion will continue to be a highly innovative cooperation model for networking the research efforts of academia and private enterprise. With their expertise in pharmacology, chemistry and dermatology, the scientists at our university have made valuable contributions to the successful development of the skin model.

“Henkel - A Brand like a Friend”. Henkel is a leader with brands and technologies that make people's lives easier, better and more beautiful. The Henkel Group, a Fortune Global 500 company, operates in three strategic business areas – Home Care, Personal Care, and Adhesives, Sealants and Surface Treatment. In fiscal 2005 the Henkel Group generated sales of 11.974 billion euros. More than 50,000 employees work for the Henkel Group worldwide. People in approximately 125 countries around the world trust in brands and technologies from Henkel.

The University of Frankfurt is the largest university of Hessen. With 35 000 students she belongs to the largest universities of Germany. The ranking of the famous Center for University Development placed the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University repeatedly amongst the ten most powerful researching universities of Germany. Her focus of excellence is within the areas of finances and law, life sciences and medicine. The University of Frankfurt is one of the most international universities in Germany. Up to the year 2014, the 100th anniversary, the government of Hessen plans to completely rebuild the sites Campus Riedberg (natural sciences) and Campus Westend.

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