



## PRESS RELEASE

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### UW Signs Licensing Agreement for Study of Eye Disease

The University of Washington has signed an exclusive patent license with Acucela Inc. for technology used in the study of potential treatments for eye disease.

Acucela, a pharmaceutical start-up company in Seattle, was founded by Dr. Ryo Kubota, a former UW faculty member. Kubota says that as a practicing ophthalmologist in Japan, he became frustrated with the lack of treatments for eye diseases. Kubota left his practice for scientific research at the UW, where he joined the lab of Dr. Thomas Reh, a professor of biological structure, as an acting research assistant professor of ophthalmology. Along with Dr. Andrew Fischer, a senior fellow in the lab, Kubota developed a method to sustain neurons derived from adult retina in tissue culture for extended periods. The University's Office of Technology Licensing then obtained a patent for the invention. Fischer was recently appointed an assistant professor in the Department of Neuroscience at Ohio State University.

"Our work represents an important technological breakthrough because there are a paucity of treatments for diseases of the eye and other neurodegenerative diseases, and one of the most difficult steps is being able to gauge the usefulness of a possible treatment," Kubota said.

Presently, the ability to test drugs based on their effect on adult primary neurons is limited, because the neurons usually die out very quickly after being cultured. The resulting deterioration of the neurons prevents the pharmaceutical industry from performing adequate analysis of potential therapeutic treatments.

Acucela's outside-the-body screening technology uses primary, mature retinal neurons, allowing for precise measurements of how actual retinal neurons are affected by different chemical entities. Acucela will use the University technology in conjunction with other proprietary technologies to identify and develop compounds that have safety and efficacy in treating different eye diseases. The company will be collaborating with pharmaceutical partners to develop these compounds and will also conduct its own internal product development.

Neurodegenerative eye diseases such as macular degeneration and glaucoma drastically affect quality of life for over 15 million Americans, and millions more worldwide.

### Acucela Forward-Looking Statement

This press release contains "forward-looking statements" as that term is defined in the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements involve risks and uncertainties, which may cause results to differ materially from those set forth in the statements. The forward-looking statements include statements regarding product development. No forward-looking statement can be guaranteed, and actual results may differ materially from those projected. Acucela undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise.

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