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## **Acucela Announces Award of Phase I SBIR Grant from NIH**

**BOTHELL – October 9, 2007** Acucela Inc. today announced that its application for a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant entitled “Identifying Cytoprotectants for Photoreceptors and RPE Cells to Treat Dry AMD” has been approved for funding of \$100,000 from the National Eye Institute, which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The goal of this SBIR project is to prove the feasibility of using OcuScreen™’s cell-based assays to identify novel cytoprotectants for cells in the retina for treating the dry form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Since the final death pathway leading to AMD is the degeneration of photoreceptors or RPE cells in the retina, finding compounds that would protect photoreceptors or RPE cells from stress-induced cell death would provide an important new approach to treat Dry AMD, an early form of AMD, which eventually leads to blindness and for which there is currently no treatment.

“We are pleased and honored to have been recognized by the NIH with a second SBIR grant. This award will provide the necessary funding for our continued research into treatment for Dry AMD. This level of recognition for our work greatly validates our OcuScreen™ technology platform.” Dr. Ryo Kubota, President and CEO of Acucela Inc. commented.

### **About OcuScreen™**

Acucela’s proprietary OcuScreen™ technology utilizes primary retinal cell cultures to discover novel therapeutic compounds for the treatment of dry macular degeneration. Acucela is expanding the scope of its OcuScreen™ technology to discover therapeutic agents for glaucoma and the potential retinal toxicity of compounds.

### **About SBIR**

SBIR is a highly competitive program that encourages small business to explore their technological potential and provides the incentive to profit from its commercialization. By reserving a specific percentage of federal R&D funds for small business, SBIR protects the small business and enables it to compete on the same level as larger businesses. SBIR funds critical startup and development stages and it encourages the commercialization of the technology, product, or service.

### **About Acucela**

Acucela Inc. is focused on developing new drug therapies for eye diseases, and particularly neurodegenerative retinal diseases such as macular degeneration. The company has proprietary disease-specific assays and technologies to identify and develop compounds that can safely and effectively treat retinal diseases and injuries. The company’s novel approaches have significant therapeutic potential to treat retinal diseases such as Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD), Stargardt’s disease, and glaucoma, which affect 50 million people worldwide. The Bothell-based company was founded in 2002. For more information, please visit <http://www.acucela.com>.

### **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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