

Genea and Merck sign global fertility collaboration agreement

SYDNEY, 28 May 2015: Australian fertility innovator Genea Biomedx has struck an exclusive global collaboration agreement with leading healthcare and life science company Merck to create a unique combined approach to fertility treatment from pre to post conception.

Through the collaboration, Genea Biomedx and Merck Serono, the biopharmaceutical business of Merck, will build on their existing strong fertility heritage to create and deliver innovative solutions to Assisted Reproductive Treatment (ART) clinics and, in turn, drive better outcomes for patients.

Under the terms of the collaboration agreement:

- Merck Serono will commercialise and market Genea Biomedx's innovative flagship fertility technologies Gavi, Geri and Gems;
- The two companies will collaborate closely on innovative service and product offerings aimed at bringing visionary solutions to the fertility community; and
- Centres of Excellence will be established to share the knowledge and best practice across all segments of fertility treatment with ART clinics worldwide.

The collaboration creates a combined leading approach to the fertility community not currently available in the field. It will address innovations from fertility assessment and treatment through to early pregnancy support.

With almost 30 years' experience at the frontline of fertility treatment, Genea Biomedx's parent company Genea has long been a leader in the research and development of fertility science. This collaboration with Merck, a leading company for innovative and top-quality high-tech products in healthcare, life science and performance materials, will help deliver on Genea's strategy to grow into an integrated fertility services and products company with broad global reach. The first stage of that growth strategy was achieved in 2014 and involved the transformation of Genea from a fertility clinic to a group of diversified fertility businesses – Genea Fertility, Genea Biomedx, Genea Biocells and Genea Consult.

Of these businesses, Genea Biomedx is focused on fertility technologies; real, game-changing solutions to the challenging issues fertility clinics face. Genea Biomedx's portfolio of products currently comprises:

- Gavi - the world's first automated vitrification instrument;
- Geri - a benchtop incubator which incorporates a time-lapse camera to capture images of embryos as they develop; and
- Gems - the latest generation of Genea's culture media for embryo cultivation.

Standardisation and automation are two of the keys to progress and improvement in treatment for patients with infertility. The collaboration agreement between Genea Biomedx and Merck Serono will give fertility clinics across the world the tools to deliver better outcomes to patients.

"Genea has forged a reputation as a leader in fertility treatment, insightful research and innovative science. Genea's combination of a world leading fertility clinic with Genea Biomedx - a world leading IVF technologies lab - creates a virtuous circle that is unique to this industry. Our innovative advances and technologies are powered by real world knowledge from our fertility clinics," Genea CEO Tomas Stojanov said.

"The partnership with Merck provides both global scale and expertise to this unique collaboration and will see both companies achieve their aim of advancing the outcomes of fertility treatment and bringing solutions to IVF labs around the world," Dr Stojanov said.

Belen Garijo, Member of the Executive Board of Merck and CEO Healthcare, said: "As a pioneer in reproductive health, we are continuously seeking to extend our product portfolio to bring innovative science and services to the fertility community. There is significant need for improved technologies in fertility treatment, since the majority of issues in ART are beyond drug therapy. The key priority of our Fertility Technologies unit at Merck Serono is to advance our fertility portfolio beyond drugs and to enable innovation in technologies and services".

"Entering a global partnership with Genea Biomedx will allow Merck to introduce innovative technologies in the ART market, further aiming to improve outcomes throughout the in vitro fertilization process. Merck Serono is dedicated to help patients realise their dream of creating a family."

“The launch of the first three products, Gems, Gavi and Geri, is just the beginning of an integrated partnership between our two companies which will deliver innovative products and thinking to fertility labs around the world - driving better and more reliable outcomes for patients. We are expert at helping people achieve their dream of a healthy baby and we are looking forward to sharing that expertise through this partnership with Merck,” Genea Biomedx General Manager Kim Giliam said.

The collaboration is effective from 1 May 2015. Financial details of the agreement are not being disclosed.

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About Genea Biomedx

Genea Biomedx creates and manufactures practical, accessible and precise fertility technologies that help standardise and automate fertility treatment. Its unique relationship with Genea Fertility means that Genea Biomedx is a manufacturer that truly understands the customers’ perspective. As a result Genea Biomedx has developed the world’s first automated vitrification instrument, and has other projects well advanced in the product pipeline.

About Gavi, Geri and Gems

- Gavi – the world’s first automated vitrification instrument; Vitrification is a process used in IVF to preserve human egg cells (oocytes) or embryos by cooling them to deep sub-zero degrees. Approaching the process in an innovative way, Gavi uses an automated, standardized protocol aiming to provide consistent results in blastocyst vitrification.
- Geri - a benchtop incubator with individually controlled incubation chambers per patient to minimize disruptive events to the early-stage embryo. It also incorporates a time-lapse camera to capture images of embryos as they develop; and
- Gems - the latest generation of Genea’s culture media for embryo cultivation.

About Merck

Merck is a leading company for innovative and top-quality high-tech products in healthcare, life science and performance materials. The company has six businesses – Merck Serono, Consumer Health, Allergopharma, Biosimilars, Merck Millipore and Performance Materials – and generated sales of around € 11.3 billion in 2014. Around 39,000 Merck employees work in 66 countries to improve the quality of life for patients, to foster the success of customers and to help meet global challenges. Merck is the world’s oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company – since 1668, the company has stood for innovation, business success and responsible entrepreneurship. Holding an approximately 70% interest, the founding family remains the majority owner of the company to this day. Merck, Darmstadt, Germany, holds the global rights to the Merck name and brand. The only exceptions are Canada and the United States, where the company operates as EMD Serono, EMD Millipore and EMD Performance Materials.