

Recent Developments in the Vision Care Industry

Trabio trial terminated

Trabio, a human monoclonal antibody designed to neutralise transforming growth factor beta-2, failed to meet the primary endpoint in a pivotal clinical trial, announced Cambridge Antibody Technology. Initial clinical trials suggested the agent could lower IOP and reduce the need for surgery in glaucoma patients. The company said it would not continue to develop the drug.

Refractec looks to Europe

US company Refractec, maker of the system used to perform conductive keratoplasty, is looking to boost sales in Europe, Asia Pacific, and South America. To this end it hired Keith Burgess for a newly created position as director of international sales. Mr Burgess previously worked at Advanced Medical Optics.

Nidek in Italy

Nidek Technologies SRL, a wholly owned subsidiary of Nidek Co. Ltd., opened a new Italian facility for research and development as well as manufacturing. The new facilities are in Albignasego near the city of Padua. The opening follows Nidek's acquisition of Italian company Fortune Technologies Srl, a developer of advanced instruments and software for ophthalmology and optometry.

New LRI instrument

Accutome launched a new Limbal Relaxing Incision (LRI) diamond knife. The knife, named after its inventor, Dr Jonathan Rubenstein, MD, has a low profile, winged footplate that allows full view of the blade during incision. The footplate allows the blade to glide across the corneal epithelium, giving the surgeon more control of the blade. The diamond blade is permanently preset to 600, 550 or 500 microns. The company also makes an in-office "Shorti" handle for the knife for use under a slit lamp.

Learning tools from Tracey

Tracey Technologies released EduTrace™, a self-guided, hands-on, software tutorial program for wavefront aberrometry. The company said it recognised an educational need to provide physicians and their staff with a better understanding of the full range of diagnostic and surgical applications of wavefront aberrometry. The EduTrace Course includes functioning aberrometry software from the iTrace™ system and over 50 actual patient cases, which the user can view and manipulate within the software. A full-colour workbook, walking the user through each case and giving an overview of the available wavefront aberrometry technologies and data displays, accompanies the software.

Automatic Rx analysis from Topcon

Topcon Medical Systems announced that its EZ-200 Automatic Rx Analyzer would be available this summer. The EZ-200 automatically reads lens power

(sphere, cylinder and axis); recognises and measure multifocals and progressives; displays far and near point distance from the optical centre for progressive lenses and measures monocular and total spectacle PD. A single-button measuring process allows quick and accurate repeatable measurements. Measurement results are displayed on a colour LCD screen.

Acuity builds board

Acuity Pharmaceuticals, a start-up ophthalmic pharmaceutical company, announced the formation of a Scientific Advisory Board filled with many well-known ophthalmologists. These include Drs. Lloyd Paul Aiello, Alexander Brucker, Yihai Cao, Alan Gewirtz, Baruch Kuppermann, Richard McCloskey, Lawrence Singerman, William Tasman, Jason S. Slakter and Lawrence A. Yannuzzi. Acuity is developing a treatment for macular degeneration called Cand5, the first-ever RNA interference-based therapeutic to enter human studies.

AMO, Visx set a date

Advanced Medical Optics and VISX announced they have selected May 26 as the date for their special meetings of stockholders concerning their planned merger. The companies also announced that the SEC declared effective their Form S-4 Registration Statement. Stockholders of record as of the close of business on April 14 of both companies will be entitled to vote at the special meetings. The transaction is expected to close shortly thereafter. Advanced Medical Optics financial results for the first quarter of 2005 included a 133% increase in net earnings to \$13.8 million, or \$0.35 per fully diluted share, compared to the same period last year. At Visx, first quarter 2005 revenues ended increased 17% to \$51.3 million from \$43.8 million in the first quarter of 2004. Net income increased 25% to \$14.7 million.