Dick Aderman says
Roche’s partners expand horizons

**Q** For more than 100 years, Roche Diagnostics has provided products to the medical laboratory, and today its diagnostics division supplies a wide array of testing products via some 19,000 employees worldwide. With that global presence, what is the company’s current strategy for the immediate future?

**A** Our strategies today are pretty simple. We will develop and sell products for the global marketplace. We will furnish solutions that provide actionable health information. We will invest in and bring innovative products to market. We foresee the opportunity to supply diagnostic solutions to healthcare that can be customizable to the individual healthcare consumer.

CYP450 is a perfect example of these strategies working together. It is an innovative product developed with a global partner (Affymetrix) to find a solution to a human health issue (proper dosing of medicines to be most efficacious in their treatment, based on the patient’s own ability to metabolize drug compounds) by supplying information that helps a physician accurately dose patients with a targeted approach rather than an empirical approach. This is one of the areas where all of the strategic elements come together.

Another area is in continuous monitoring of blood-glucose levels and infusion for type I diabetics. The acquisition of Disetronic Medical Systems moves us down the continuum toward the vision of developing an artificial pancreas. An innovative, global solution provides real-time diagnostic information, impacting therapy management for the individual as the situation demands. There are several products and technologies we are pursuing that fit into this strategic architecture as well. It is our fundamental approach to the market today and into the future.

**Q** Could you explain how Roche’s long-term partnerships have expanded the company’s ability to serve medical laboratories? What direction does Roche Diagnostics intend to take with its new alliances?

**A** Our partnerships and alliances are an important part of how we will shape the marketplace. Today, Roche spends more that two times what our nearest competitor spends on research and development (R&D). But even with the large sum of resources we have, we know that we need access to research and technologies beyond our capabilities. That is why we have so many partnerships.

Hitachi is a great example of a long-term partnership that has benefited both companies. This partnership allows us to focus on R&D in core competencies while our partners focus on R&D in their core competencies. We then bring these together and provide more than we could simply on our own. One plus one equals three or four. Going forward, we will continue to partner (like Affymetrix), network (like our Molecular Centers of Excellence), and even make our intellectual property available (like Pro-BNP) as often, if not more so, than in the past. Our clear direction is that we will continue on this path.

**Q** With the critical laboratory personnel shortage, what products does Roche Diagnostics offer that aid laboratorians handling ever-increasing volumes of testing?

**A** Roche has been acutely aware of the needs to address labor and labor shortages for many years. From our Hitachi 747s and Integra to our integrated modular systems and automation systems, we have been working to make the laboratory more productive. In July, at the AACC in Los Angeles, we introduced our third generation of systems integrating chemistry and immu-
nochemistry; we also introduced our “Middleware Solution” powered by Data Innovations, another way to help laboratorians manage the weight of daily information and turnaround time requirements.

Through our professional services team, we are supplying software tools to benchmark and assess areas for improved efficiency. We can then provide customers with consultants who can help facilitate the necessary improvements or, with training in Six Sigma and Lean, empower their employees to self-direct the improvement necessary to achieve greater efficiency.

Q In what ways does Roche Diagnostics support medical laboratory personnel with educational programs and/or training? Does the company use an online learning mechanism? In what other ways does Roche Diagnostics service its customers via the Internet? How has Internet communication changed the way Roche conducts business generally?

A We provide training on our products both in Indianapolis and at the customer site. We also provide online training and CME credits. Beyond that, MyLabOnline.com is our website; it was designed to put critical information at our customers’ fingertips. Our goal is to make MyLabOnline.com the daily destination for our customers, and supply important product information, tips, a place to go online and chat with other laboratorians, and many other features. We have designed the site strictly through customer feedback and prioritization.

Q What strategy does the company have in place to meet the demands emerging global diseases pose?

A We see great application for all of our current technologies and our emerging technologies to fight new and existing diseases. Clearly, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, women’s health, and infectious disease are areas of focus for us. There are also others that require our attention, but these are the main ones.

Q Bioterrorism is more of a threat today than in 2001 when Roche Diagnostics — in conjunction with the Mayo Clinic — developed its Rapid DNA test, which is used to identify anthrax. Has that test been improved or changed since it was first developed? Is the company engaged in developing other tests that would assist in the rapid identification of other bioterror agents?

A The anthrax test we developed in cooperation with the Mayo Clinic has been filed with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under an Investigational Device Exemption (IDE), which allows its use in testing true clinical samples under specified protocols. Thankfully, there have been precious few cases of anthrax in the last two years, so we have not completed the necessary clinical trials to achieve FDA clearance. But the test remains active in the IDE program today.

We have and will remain in close contact with federal authorities, such as the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to ensure that we can support the defense against any new bioterrorist-threat agents. In this context, we have seen new, emerging infectious diseases, such as SARS and West Nile virus, pose a similar threat and require response systems analogous to those needed for bioterrorist agents. Last year, we introduced a test for SARS in direct response to the outbreak originating in China but posing a risk for all, including here in the United States. Similarly, we developed a West Nile virus assay in close cooperation with the FDA to screen blood donations as this pathogen endangered the safety of our blood supply. We will continue to work with the government and other stakeholders to provide solutions for exposures that threaten the public health.

Q What trends and technologies are driving Roche Diagnostics presently?

A Several trends are driving us forward, and we can tie them back to our divisional strategies. Clearly, we see actionable healthcare information as a trend in the marketplace. The need to connect labs to physicians and physicians to patients is emerging rapidly. The need to assist laboratories with outreach and to help them manage their labs as revenue-generating businesses is imperative. As testing provides new and more complex results, data will have to be turned into information that physicians can use to improve patient outcomes. Educating physicians — and even patients — will become more of the domain of the laboratory and those of us who supply the lab. Globally, these trends are at different stages in differing regions of the world; nonetheless, they are emerging rapidly.

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