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## ImmusanT Raises \$20 Million in Series A Financing to Advance Immunotherapeutic and Diagnostic for Celiac Disease

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Dec. 13, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- ImmusanT, Inc. announced today it has raised \$20 million in Series A financing from Vatera Healthcare Partners LLC to advance development of the biotechnology company's immunotherapeutic vaccine Nexvax2®, companion diagnostic and monitoring tool for celiac disease. The proceeds will fund the Nexvax2 therapeutic and diagnostic development plan to the point of demonstrating proof-of-concept. ImmusanT expects to initiate the next clinical trial in early 2012.

"ImmusanT's Nexvax2 and companion diagnostic address the rapidly growing number of patients diagnosed with celiac disease whose only option is a strict diet that eliminates gluten. At Vatera we seek to invest in therapies that fulfill unmet medical needs and offer a significant clinical benefit to patients. We believe that ImmusanT's technology has the potential to dramatically improve the quality of life for celiac disease patients," said Sundar Kodiyalam, Managing Director of Vatera Holdings LLC.

ImmusanT's product pipeline includes Nexvax2, which combines three proprietary peptides that elicit an immune response in patients with celiac disease who carry the immune recognition gene HLA-DQ2, which includes approximately 80% of patients. ImmusanT Scientific Founder and Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Bob Anderson discovered the three peptides responsible for making gluten toxic to people with the disease. Nexvax2 is designed to tolerize celiac disease patients to the toxic effects of gluten, enabling them to return to a normal diet. Safety, tolerability and bioactivity of Nexvax2 have been established in a Phase 1 clinical study

([http://www.immusant.com/files/ImmusanT\\_DDW\\_P1\\_PR\\_FINALwire.pdf](http://www.immusant.com/files/ImmusanT_DDW_P1_PR_FINALwire.pdf)) and presented at this year's Digestive Disease Week (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quRIF7QdmhA>).

ImmusanT is also developing a proprietary whole-blood functional T-cell test for use both as a standalone diagnostic for celiac disease and as a monitoring tool for the therapeutic. In the company's dual-track product development strategy, clinical trial subjects will be screened using the diagnostic along with standard serology tests to identify patients most likely to respond to Nexvax2.

"There is tremendous enthusiasm for Nexvax2 from celiac patients and clinicians who want a therapy that allows patients to resume a normal diet and return to good health and improved quality of life. The financial backing and support of Vatera Healthcare Partners will allow us to round out our team and advance our research and development programs to bear out this hypothesis," said Leslie J. Williams, Founder, President and CEO of ImmusanT, Inc.

### **About Celiac Disease and Nexvax2**

Celiac disease is an inherited autoimmune disorder that is triggered by foods containing gluten, the main protein in wheat, rye and barley, affecting the digestive process of the small intestine. Nexvax2 is delivered intradermally in small doses to reprogram and tolerize the disease-causing T-cells triggered by the patient's immune response to gluten. The approach is similar to treatments for allergies to cats, ragweed or dust mites, whereby repeated doses establish non-responsiveness to a specific antigen, and in the case of celiac disease, reduces or eliminates the body's rejection of dietary gluten. With no available drug therapy, the only option for the 1% of the global population that has celiac disease is a gluten-free diet, which is fraught with compliance issues and inadvertent exposure leaving patients at risk for long-term intestinal damage. By reprogramming the T-cell response, the Nexvax2 approach is designed to reduce inflammation in the villi that line the small intestine and are responsible for absorbing nutrients. This returns the intestine to a normal healthy state.

### **About Vatera Healthcare Partners LLC**

Vatera Healthcare Partners LLC is a venture capital firm established by Michael Jaharis, Founder of Kos Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a specialty pharmaceutical company sold to Abbott Laboratories in 2006, and of Key Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a specialty pharmaceutical company that merged with Schering-Plough in 1986. Vatera focuses on investing in biopharmaceutical firms and products with the goal of building and growing companies by leveraging the team's collective experience and expertise in the pharmaceutical industry and strong network of relationships within industry and academia.

### **About ImmusanT, Inc.**

ImmusanT is a privately-held biotechnology company focused on restoring tolerance to gluten in celiac disease by harnessing new discoveries in immunology that improve diagnosis and treatment and return patients to a normal diet, good health and improved quality of life. The company is developing Nexvax2®, a therapeutic vaccine for celiac disease, and a companion diagnostic and monitoring tool to improve celiac disease management. ImmusanT's targeted immunotherapy discovery platform can be applied to a variety of epitope-specific autoimmune diseases. More information can be found at [www.ImmusanT.com](http://www.immusant.com/) (<http://www.immusant.com/>).

SOURCE ImmusanT, Inc.

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