



dedicated to finding a cure



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Fast Forward, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and Axxam SpA
Join Forces to Accelerate Development of Treatments for Multiple Sclerosis
and Type 1 Diabetes**

***Patient Advocacy Partners Forge Collaboration to Fund Discovery of New Drugs
that Target the Immune System***

New York, USA and Milan, Italy, January 19, 2010 – *Fast Forward, LLC*, the commercial drug development arm of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the *Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF)*, the leader in research leading to a cure for type 1 diabetes in the world today announced a collaborative partnership with Axxam SpA - a leading company in conducting early-stage discovery research programs for the life science industry - to develop new treatments for two autoimmune diseases, multiple sclerosis (MS) and type 1 diabetes (T1D).

Under the terms of the agreement, Axxam will screen its extensive chemical library to identify compounds that can target specific ion channels in the immune system. Ion channels are tiny pores on the surface of immune cells that control the influx of charged particles and allow the cells to become activated to perform their natural surveillance and protection functions. Recent studies have found that immune cells in MS and T1D contain high levels of a specific ion channel, Kv1.3, and that the hyperactivity of this channel contributes to the dysfunction of the immune system in MS and T1D. If the initial research is successful, Axxam will have identified compounds that modulate Kv1.3 ion channel activities, and these will be further developed by the company as potential therapies for MS and T1D.

The agreement with Axxam is the first of its kind between cross-disciplinary patient advocacy organizations and represents a new frontier in which groups such as *JDRF* and *Fast Forward* ally to lessen the risk of drug discovery and accelerate the development of new therapies that can impact multi-disorders. “We are pleased to partner with Axxam and *JDRF* to advance the development of new treatments for T1D and MS,” said Dr. Timothy Coetzee, President of *Fast Forward*. Adds Dr. Coetzee “People with MS and T1D need more treatment options and the approach taken by Axxam holds great promise for both diseases.”

“Our partnership with Fast Forward and Axxam opens exciting new avenues for JDRF to speed the translation of basic research into drugs and treatments for type 1 diabetes,” said Alan J.

Lewis, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer of JDRF. “Research into the Kv1.3 ion channel has the potential to negate the autoimmune process causing type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis, which must be addressed to cure these diseases.”

“It’s rewarding for Axxam to be working with two world class non-profits dedicated to speeding new therapies to their constituencies,” said Dr. Stefan Lohmer, Ph.D., Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Axxam. “This collaboration recognizes the quality of our research in the challenging ion channels field and we hope to be on the cusp for developing potential new therapies for both type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis.”

About JDRF:

JDRF is the worldwide leader for research to cure type 1 diabetes. It sets the global agenda for diabetes research, and is the largest charitable funder and advocate of diabetes science worldwide.

The mission of JDRF is to find a cure for diabetes and its complications through the support of research. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that strikes children and adults suddenly, and can be fatal. Until a cure is found, people with type 1 diabetes have to test their blood sugar and give themselves insulin injections multiple times or use a pump – each day, every day of their lives. And even with that intensive care, insulin is not a cure for diabetes, nor does it prevent its eventual and devastating complications, which may include kidney failure, blindness, heart disease, stroke, and amputation.

Since its founding in 1970 by parents of children with type 1 diabetes, JDRF has awarded more than \$1.4 billion to diabetes research, including \$101 million in FY2009. In FY2009, JDRF funded research projects in 22 countries throughout the world, including more than 40 human clinical trials.

About Fast Forward, LLC

Fast Forward, LLC is a nonprofit organization and critical initiative established by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in order to accelerate the development of treatments for MS. Fast Forward will accomplish its mission by connecting university-based MS research with private-sector drug development and by funding small biotechnology/pharmaceutical companies to develop innovative new MS therapies and repurpose FDA-approved drugs as new treatments for MS. For more information visit: www.fastforward.org

About MS and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society

MS is a chronic, unpredictable neurological disease that affects the central nervous system. It is thought to be an autoimmune disorder, meaning the immune system incorrectly attacks healthy tissue. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. These problems may be permanent or may come and go. The National MS Society addresses the challenges of each person affected by MS by funding cutting-edge research, driving change through advocacy, facilitating professional education, collaborating with MS organizations around the world, and providing programs and services designed to help people with MS and their families move their lives forward. The Society is dedicated to achieving a world free of MS. Join the movement at www.nationalMSSociety.org

About Axxam SpA

Axxam is a discovery company focused on research programs for different applications in the life science industry. They are a privately owned biotech firm based at the San Raffaele Biomedical Science Park in Milan (Italy), with a team of about 60 highly skilled qualified people. Axxam began operations as an independent and privately-owned company in November 2001, but its roots are built upon years of experience as part of the Bayer HealthCare, Research and Development organization. The company performs a wide range of activities including assay development, high-throughput screening, compound profiling and hits to leads testing. In addition, Axxam conducts several discovery programs for selected targets which are carried out in partnership with other companies or non-profit organizations. For more information, please visit www.axxam.com.

Contacts:

Fast Forward, LLC Arney Rosenblat Tel: (212) 476-0436 Email: Arney.rosenblat@nmss.org	Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation William Ahearn Tel: (212) 479-7531 Email: wahearn@jdrf.org
Axxam, SpA Stefan Lohmer, Ph.D Tel: +39 02 2105622 Email: stefan.lohmer.sl@axxam.com	