



For Immediate Release

**ASTERAND'S SUBSIDIARY BIOSEEK AND ONO INITIATE NEW MULTI-YEAR
DRUG DISCOVERY COLLABORATION**

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA and OSAKA, JAPAN – March 22, 2010 – BioSeek, LLC, a subsidiary of Asterand plc (LSE: ATD), a pioneer in the application of predictive human biology to drug discovery, and Ono Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., an R&D-oriented global specialty pharmaceuticals company, announced today that they have signed a new multi-year drug discovery collaboration agreement. Under the three-year research plan, BioSeek will apply its proprietary BioMAP® platform in an exclusive collaboration centered on a specific drug target class designated by Ono, performing phenotypic screening and for hit identification, lead optimization and clinical candidate selection. According to the agreement's terms, BioSeek will receive research funding and milestone payments upon achievement of a certain milestone by a drug candidate discovered under this collaboration. Ono will have worldwide rights to develop and sell all pharmaceutical products discovered through the collaboration.

Martyn Coombs, Chief Executive Officer of Asterand (parent company of BioSeek LLC) commented:

“We sincerely look forward to working with Ono as a collaborative partner. Ono's decision to establish this new relationship with BioSeek is an important endorsement of both our technology platform and collaborative research model. Since the range of activities included spans the breadth of BioMAP®'s potential, we expect great success in this collaboration.”

Kazuhito Kawabata, Ph.D., Managing Director, Research Headquarters at Ono noted:

“We highly value BioSeek's drug discovery technologies (BioMAP® systems) in our collaboration. We anticipate that this collaboration will result in identifying unique and innovative pharmaceutical product efficiently in the regions where Ono can exploit its technology and know-how acquired and developed through our research activities”

BioMAP® Systems are primary cell-based models of human disease biology, designed to replicate the intricate cell and pathway interactions as they are observed in human pharmacology and toxicology. Depending on their mechanism of action, compounds induce specific patterns of changes in these systems (BioMAP® profiles) that can be compared to a large number of reference profiles in the BioMAP® Database. Assessment with BioMAP® provides early insight into human pharmacological and toxicological properties of compounds, including on- and off-target effects, dose responses, and the discrimination of closely related compounds.

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About Ono Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.

In keeping with its philosophy of “Dedicated to Man’s Fight against Disease and Pain,” Ono has always striven to achieve its goal of serving as an R&D-oriented global specialty pharmaceuticals, aiming to developing innovative and globally recognized drugs. To do this, Ono has been engaged in drug discovery research based on accumulated technologies and know-how – in areas where our strengths can be fully exploited (i.e. bioactive lipid agonists and enzyme inhibitors such as proteases and kinases). In addition, modulators of membrane transport system such as ion-channels and transporters as well as biotechnology based medicines are also the areas of our focus where we drive forward our research effectively deploying our know-how from neuroscience research and our gene assets together with the latest information acquired from global research institutions on drug discovery targets and the cutting-edge drug discovery technologies that biopharmaceutical companies can offer.

For more information, go to <http://www.ono.co.jp>.

About BioSeek

BioSeek LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Asterand plc, is improving the success rate of pharmaceutical research and development by integrating human biology from the earliest stages of drug discovery onward. The company’s BioMAP® Systems incorporate predictive primary human cell-based disease models that generate uniquely informative activity profiles of each potential drug, assisting in the selection and development of new drug candidates. BioSeek is leveraging BioMAP® Systems technology in collaborations to enhance the productivity of its pharmaceutical partners’ pipelines, and in the company’s internal discovery programs. For more information, go to www.bioseekinc.com.

For more information about Asterand, go to www.asterand.com.