

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MassChallenge 2010 Competition Winner Awarded Research Grant

BOSTON MA – MassChallenge, the global start-up competition, announced today that one of its 2010 accelerator finalists had been awarded a research grant by the Johnson & Johnson Corporate Office of Science and Technology (COSAT). The grant will be used to further ViThera Pharmaceuticals' work in the development of a novel treatment for inflammatory bowel disease. The two organizations found common ground through their involvement with MassChallenge, with ViThera being a 2010 Silver Winner and COSAT sponsoring the startup accelerator since 2010.

COSAT has a long history of supporting the development of new technologies and products through collaboration with academic institutions and early stage companies.

ViThera is a young biotech company based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Its research combines the benefits of probiotics with synthetic biology to create therapeutics for a variety of chronic diseases, including inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis. Scientists at ViThera developed EnLact™, strains engineered in lactic acid and probiotic bacteria that express beneficial proteins and modulate disease within patients' bodies. ViThera's lead program, VT301, uses EnLact™ technology to treat symptoms of inflammatory bowel diseases by healing the mucosal lining and is on track to enter clinical testing for ulcerative colitis in 2014. ViThera participated in MassChallenge, the largest-ever startup accelerator, and was recognized as a 2010 Silver Winner.

"EnLact™ technology puts ViThera at the cutting edge of biologic therapy," said ViThera Founder and President Johannes Fruehauf, MD, PhD. "MassChallenge provided us with mentors and resources and connected us with our partners at J&J COSAT. The research grant from COSAT allowed us to accelerate critical translational studies to advance our VT301 program for inflammatory bowel disease. We look forward to making further strides in our research through this new partnership."

The MassChallenge Accelerator and Competition provides early-stage entrepreneurs with the resources they need to succeed, including industry-specific mentoring, hundreds of networking events and workshops, and free office space in Boston's Innovation District. Startups from any industry are eligible to apply to MassChallenge, and ViThera is one of many life science and healthcare companies to benefit from the accelerator. Others include Alkeus Pharmaceuticals, Therapeutic Systems, Energesis Pharmaceuticals, and BIOARRAY Therapeutics.

"ViThera is composed of the kind of people that simply will not rest until they've changed the world," said MassChallenge Founder and President Akhil Nigam. "MassChallenge is always looking to empower more companies like ViThera, whose ideas have the potential to make a dramatic impact on the way we treat diseases."

About ViThera Pharmaceuticals

ViThera strives to change the way patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) are treated. Current IBD therapies focus on suppressing the immune system, and these can have serious side effects. ViThera's VT301 program focuses on restoring and maintaining the integrity of the GI epithelium in

patients with IBD. This treatment is designed to help patients with active disease achieve remission faster and patients in remission to avoid flares. Currently in preclinical development, VT301 is expected to enter clinical trials in 2014 in patients with mild to moderate Ulcerative Colitis. ViThera is using its EnLact™ platform, combining synthetic biology in engineered probiotic bacteria to deliver therapeutic molecules in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. ViThera is privately owned and backed by J&J COSAT and BioInnovation. www.vitherapharma.com

About MassChallenge

[MassChallenge](#) is the **largest-ever startup accelerator and competition**, and the first to support high-impact, early-stage entrepreneurs with **no strings attached**. Benefits for startups include:

- **Three month accelerator program.** World-class mentorship and training, free office space, access to funding, legal advice, cofounders, media exposure and more.
- **\$1M in Cash Awards.** \$4M+ in-kind support.
- **Open to all.** Any startup can enter, from anywhere, in any industry.
- **No equity taken.** No restrictions applied.

Over 1200 startups have entered the competition and participate in the MassChallenge program 2012, a 69% increase over 2011.

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