University Signs Exclusive Agreement with SiMPore Inc. to Commercialize Innovative Membrane Technology

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May 2, 2007，The University of Rochester and SiMPore Inc., a new Rochester-based biotechnology company, have signed an exclusive agreement granting SiMPore the rights to commercialize an innovative, ultra-thin membrane invented by University scientists.

The porous membrane is so thin it's invisible edge-on, and may revolutionize the way doctors and scientists manipulate objects as small as a molecule. Despite being only 50 atoms thick, the silicon filter can withstand surprisingly high pressures and may be a key to better separation of blood proteins for dialysis patients, speeding ion exchange in fuel cells, creating a new environment for growing neurological stem cells, and purifying air and water in hospitals and clean-rooms at the nanoscopic level.

The license agreement granted by the University gives SiMPore exclusive, worldwide rights to produce and market the ultra-thin membrane. SiMPore will develop and sell separation products incorporating the membrane to researchers, as well as for industrial and medical applications.

"This is very exciting technology and we expect big things from Simpore," says Jack Fraser, deputy director of the Office of Technology Transfer at the University. "It has been a pleasure helping this company get going."

"We are very pleased to see our work come to fruition in the signing of this agreement and we look forward to working with SiMPore in the future," says Christopher Striemer, research associate at the University of Rochester and lead inventor of the membrane. "It will be exciting to see SiMPore commercialize this very promising technology."

The membrane technology was developed as a collaborative efforts between University researchers in the Department of Electrical and Computer and the Department of Biomedical Engineering.

At more than 4,000 times thinner than a human hair, the membrane is one of the world's thinnest materials—thousands of times thinner than similar filters in use today. The thinness and ability to adjust its pore size give the filter significant advantages over current membranes in its ability to separate molecules, making it possible to sort proteins quickly and inexpensively.

"We are pleased to have the University of Rochester as a development partner and look forward to building on the University's successes as we develop the ultra-thin silicon membrane technology," says SiMPore CEO Richard D. Richmond. "This membrane will fundamentally change how proteins and other biological molecules are separated and processed."

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