



For Immediate Release

## **Yissum Announces the Launch of the Hebrew University's Genetic Resource for Studies of Common Diseases**

***- The Hebrew University Genetic Resource (HUGR) platform includes 15,000 DNA samples of Ashkenazi Jews -***

***- The genetic resource was successfully used to identify a novel gene variant linked to schizophrenia in women -***

Jerusalem, Israel, March 10, 2008 - Yissum, the Technology Transfer Company of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Israel, announced today the launch of the Hebrew University Genetic Resource (HUGR) platform for research on the genetic basis of diseases. HUGR, a unique case-control DNA database for genetic association studies of common diseases, consists of 15,000 DNA samples from Ashkenazi Jews and represents 16 different diseases. The scientific community can directly access the DNA samples through HUGR ([www.hugr.org](http://www.hugr.org)) and test genes of interest in one of the represented diseases.

HUGR has already proved useful in various studies, including a recent study where a gene variant that increases the risk of developing schizophrenia in women but not in men, was identified. The study was published in the journal *PLoS Genetics* (Shifman et al., February 2008, Vol. 4:1-7:<http://genetics.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371/journal.pgen.0040028>).

"This study is an excellent example of the potential of the HUGR platform. The effect of the gene variant on schizophrenia was found in several populations, but was strongest in the Ashkenazi Jewish population. To the best of my knowledge this was the first time that a whole-genome association study on schizophrenia was undertaken at a scale capable of producing meaningful and replicable results," said Professor Ariel Darvasi from the Department of Genetics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Nava Swersky Sofer, Yissum President & CEO added, "We are pleased to be able to provide this important resource to researchers, for the benefit of the public. This

unique database can provide valuable information to researchers seeking remedies for many debilitating diseases.”

HUGR consists of DNA samples collected solely from the Ashkenazi Jewish population in Israel. The genetic and environmental homogeneity of the Ashkenazi Jewish population renders this database especially valuable for genetic studies. Among the 16 diseases represented in the database are diabetes types I and II, several cancers, neurological diseases, psychiatric diseases, hypertension and asthma. For most diseases, there are more than 500 samples per disease and a common panel of over 5,000 healthy controls. Each sample contains extensive phenotypic information, including family history, disease characterization, drug treatments, efficacy and adverse events. Scientists can order genotyping of any single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) of interest on any of the samples and solely own the results.

### **About Yissum**

Yissum was founded in 1964 to protect the Hebrew University’s intellectual property and commercialize it. \$1 Billion in annual sales are generated by products based on Hebrew University technologies licensed out by Yissum. Ranked among the top technology transfer companies in the world, Yissum has registered 5500 patents covering 1600 inventions; licensed out 480 technologies and spun out 65 companies. Yissum’s business partners span the globe and include companies such as Novartis, Microsoft, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Intel, Teva and many more. For further information please visit [www.yissum.co.il](http://www.yissum.co.il)

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