

## *Media release*

### **Health Canada Approves Groundbreaking Cancer Treatment AVASTIN™**

*- Unique cancer treatment inhibits blood flow to tumours and improves  
chemotherapy delivery -*

**Mississauga, ON – September 12, 2005** –The breakthrough cancer drug AVASTIN™ (bevacizumab, rhuMAb-VEGF) has been approved by Health Canada for the treatment of first-line advanced colorectal cancer. This unique, life-extending medicine has been shown to increase patients' life expectancy by an average of 30 percent when combined with chemotherapy (20.3 months versus 15.6 months a difference of 4.7 months) compared to chemotherapy alone.<sup>1</sup> AVASTIN also plays a role in slowing cancer progression - on average, the addition of AVASTIN to chemotherapy increased by 71 percent the amount of time that patients were without disease progression, compared to patients receiving chemotherapy alone.<sup>1</sup>

The result of years of scientific research, AVASTIN is the first anti-angiogenic treatment available in Canada. Angiogenesis is the process of new blood vessel growth which a tumour requires to develop and spread. AVASTIN targets Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF), the key mediator of angiogenesis thereby stopping tumours from growing and spreading to other parts of the body. Additionally, AVASTIN helps facilitate improved delivery of chemotherapy to the tumour.

“Clinical trials have clearly demonstrated that AVASTIN improves survival in advanced colorectal cancer. This is an important advance and provides significant enhancement to our current standards of care,” explains Dr. Malcolm Moore, Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology at Princess Margaret Hospital.

-more-

Barry D. Stein, President, Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada said, “We are very pleased that Health Canada has approved AVASTIN. Canadian colorectal cancer patients will finally have the opportunity to benefit from a treatment that has become part of the standard of care for metastatic colorectal cancer in the United States. AVASTIN, in combination with other available treatments, will lead to a further increase in survival as patients combat the second biggest cancer killer in the country.”

### **About AVASTIN**

AVASTIN is the first treatment available in Canada that inhibits angiogenesis – the growth of a network of blood vessels that supply nutrients and oxygen to cancerous tissues. AVASTIN targets a naturally occurring protein called VEGF (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor), a key mediator of angiogenesis, responsible for stimulating the growth of blood vessels that nourish tumours, thus stopping them from growing or spreading to other parts of the body. In Canada, AVASTIN will be used for first-line treatment of patients with metastatic colorectal cancer in combination with chemotherapy.

In the pivotal Phase III study, the addition of AVASTIN to chemotherapy (irinotecan/5-fluorouracil/leucovorin) significantly extended survival by, on average, five months (20.3 months versus 15.6 months) for people with previously untreated metastatic colorectal cancer. AVASTIN with chemotherapy also significantly increased by 70% the amount of time that patients were without disease progression compared to patients receiving chemotherapy alone. (10.6 months vs. 6.2 months).<sup>1</sup> AVASTIN did not increase chemotherapy related toxicities and the most frequently reported AVASTIN related adverse events were hypertension, proteinuria and nose bleeds.

As AVASTIN’s mechanism may be relevant in a number of malignant tumours, Roche and Genentech, the product’s developer, are also investigating the potential clinical benefit of AVASTIN in other cancers, including non-small cell lung cancer, breast cancer, pancreatic cancer and renal cell carcinoma.

AVASTIN will be available in Canada at the beginning of November.

### **About Colorectal Cancer**

In Canada, approximately 19,600 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed this year, with approximately 8,400 Canadians dying from the disease.<sup>2</sup> It affects both men and women equally. On average, 377 Canadians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer every week. One in 14 men is expected to develop colorectal cancer during their lifetime, and one in 28 will die of it. One in 16 women is expected to develop colorectal cancer during their lifetime, and one in 31 will die of it.

-more-

### **About Roche**

Hoffmann-La Roche Limited is a healthcare company committed to the discovery and development of new and innovative medicines to help treat human illnesses. The company is active in a broad range of therapeutic categories including oncology, virology, cardiology, transplantation, diagnostics and obesity.

-30-

Physician spokespeople available in: Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City.

### **For further information, please contact:**

Nicole Bell  
Cohn & Wolfe  
(416) 924-5700 ext. 4087  
nicole\_bell@ca.cohnwolfe.com

### **References:**

1. Hurwitz H, Fehrenbacher L, Novotny W, et al. Bevacizumab plus Irinotecan, Fluorouracil, and Leucovorin for Metastatic Colorectal Cancer. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2004; 350(23): 2335–2342.
2. Health Canada. Screening for colorectal cancer. [online] 2002 [cited 2005 August 25]. Available from: [URL:http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/iyh/diseases/colorectal.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/iyh/diseases/colorectal.html)
3. Canadian Cancer Society 2005.