



- UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL JULY 10, 2024, 2PM (AMS) -

## **Surfix Diagnostics, the Netherlands Cancer Institute and CRCbioscreen join forces to validate biomarkers for colorectal cancer screening**

Amsterdam and Wageningen, Netherlands, July 10, 2024: Today, Surfix Diagnostics alongside the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI) and CRCbioscreen, announce a collaboration aimed at enhancing colorectal cancer (CRC) screening methods. This project is set to leverage Surfix Diagnostics' advanced photonic diagnostic platform and novel biomarkers targeting molecularly-defined high risk precursor lesions and cancer discovered by NKI. This project is supported by a PPP grant from the TKI-program Life Sciences & Health of Health~Holland, marking a significant step forward in non-invasive colorectal cancer early detection.

Globally, colorectal cancer impacts 1.9 million people each year, standing as a leading cause of cancer mortality. Despite the deployment of the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) in current screening initiatives, which identifies blood in stool samples through hemoglobin detection, there remains a critical gap in sensitivity. Approximately 25-30% of cancers and 70% of advanced adenomas go undetected by the FIT, underscoring the urgent need for more refined screening methods. Recently, the research group at NKI, in collaboration with CRCbioscreen, presented the multitargetFIT test in the scientific journal *Lancet Oncology*. This new test aims at the detection of three protein biomarkers in stool leading to an improved detection, compared to FIT, of advanced adenomas, next to CRC. The current project concerns a different set of biomarkers in stool that aim to detect adenomas with a specific molecular profile that makes them prone to progress to cancer.. The NKI's identification of protein biomarkers in stool samples for detecting CRC and these molecularly high-risk adenomas presents an opportunity to significantly improve screening accuracy.

The PHOBICCS project, a collaborative effort between Surfix Diagnostics, the NKI and CRCbioscreen, is dedicated to developing a stool-based test for these newly discovered biomarkers, utilizing Surfix Diagnostics' ultra-sensitive photonic diagnostics platform. Positive outcomes from this project could lead to further development of this biomarker test by CRCbioscreen, offering a more effective solution for CRC screening in the future.

### **Societal Benefits**

This innovative test aims to detect precursor lesions more accurately, enabling early intervention and preventing cancer development. Such advancements promise to reduce the psychological and physical impact on individuals, enhancing overall quality of life and decreasing CRC mortality rates without the need for intensive treatments.

### **Economic Benefits**

By focusing on the treatment of relevant precursor lesions rather than advanced cancers, significant reductions in healthcare costs can be achieved. This approach avoids the expenses associated with surgical interventions, hospital stays, and high cost oncological treatments, while also allowing individuals to continue contributing actively to society.

### **Scientific Benefits**

The collaboration brings together a unique blend of technological expertise and biological/clinical application knowledge, poised to surpass the capabilities of the current FIT and improve CRC screening efficacy. This project not only holds significant promise for the Dutch scientific community but also stands to influence global research efforts in developing new screening tests.

### **Voices from the Consortium**

Jos Lunenberg, CEO of Surfix Diagnostics, shared: "In this project, we will contribute with our innovative photonic diagnostics platform, and that fills us with pride and promises to become a great showcase of the power of our platform in early cancer detection."

Dr. Beatriz Carvalho from the NKI's Department of Pathology expressed her enthusiasm: "With our collective expertise, innovative drive, and technological capabilities, we are on track to develop a new screening method that can be further validated through the use of clinical samples available at our institute."

Dr. Henri Theunissen, CEO of CRCbioscreen, added: "We are thrilled to contribute to this consortium. This project aligns with our mission to enhance CRC patient outcomes, bringing our biomarkers one step closer to making a life-saving difference."

### **About the Partners**

Surfix Diagnostics originates as a spin-off from the Organic Chemistry department of Wageningen University & Research, Surfix has provided expert R&D services in biosensor nanocoatings and microfluidics for a decade. Since 2021, Surfix Diagnostics has pivoted towards developing an ultra-sensitivity photonic diagnostics platform for point-of-care (PoC) applications. Amongst the areas of focus is co-development of assays for the human diagnostics liquid biopsy market, particularly in cancer detection, screening, and monitoring. *You bring your biomarkers, we tailor our instrument and cartridge and jointly we bring ground-breaking PoC assays to market.*

The Netherlands Cancer Institute comprises an internationally acclaimed research institute as well as a dedicated cancer clinic. This combination ensures rapid translation of basic research into clinical applications. The Translational Gastrointestinal Oncology group is dedicated to the discovery and validation towards implementation of biomarkers for early detection of colorectal cancer (CRC).

CRCbioscreen is a spin off company from the Netherlands Cancer Institute founded in 2021. The company holds an exclusive license on the intellectual property of NKI's Translational Gastrointestinal Oncology group regarding a stool -based screening test directed against a combination of proteins has the potential to increase sensitivity for molecular high-risk precursor lesions of colorectal cancer

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