



For immediate release

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Aculight Corporation Awarded SBIR Contract to Develop Laser-Based Vestibular Implant

Device Will Use Infrared Nerve Stimulation to Treat Impaired Balance and Vision

Bothell, Wash., February 15, 2008 – Aculight Corporation, a leading developer of innovative laser technologies, has been awarded a new contract under the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. The \$850,000 two-phase fast-track award from the National Institutes of Health will fund a joint effort with the University of Washington (Seattle, WA) to develop a laser-based vestibular implant.

“Balance disorders such as vertigo and dizziness are among the most common reasons that elderly Americans seek health care,” said Mark Bendett, Aculight’s director of medical products. “We’re laying the foundation for an optical implant that could treat patients with balance and vision impairments due to vestibular system damage. This SBIR will enable Aculight to produce a laser-based nerve stimulation device that can be used in research studies at the University of Washington prior to developing a model for clinical applications.”

The vestibular system is located within the inner ear; it is the body’s balance system. It sends signals to the muscles that keep us upright and to the neural structures that control our eye movements. Balance and vision impairments occur when the vestibular hair cells become damaged, prohibiting the transmission of sensory signals to the brain. Currently, there are no clinically available treatments to restore the loss of sensory information. However, researchers believe that direct vestibular stimulation may alleviate symptoms in many patients. Infrared stimulation, in particular, could provide a precise, controlled, non-contact method of stimulating the nerve.

“Aculight is pioneering infrared neural stimulation,” said Bendett. “We first developed our Capella infrared nerve stimulator to enable and encourage research applications. We’ve



also received an SBIR award to develop the first optical cochlear implant. Now we're working with two leading vestibular groups to develop an optical vestibular implant. We believe that optical nerve stimulation could revolutionize treatment for many of the neurological disorders plaguing patients today."

Aculight's optical vestibular implant technology will be a key element in the company's rapidly growing medical platform, which includes the Capella™ R-1850, the first infrared neural stimulator. Aculight's neural stimulation technologies will be manufactured in the company's ISO 9001:2000-certified manufacturing facility along with its proprietary Perseus™ pulsed fiber lasers and Argos™ optical parametric oscillators. Aculight also designs and manufactures laser-based products on an OEM basis.

About Aculight

Founded in 1993, Aculight is focused on being the leader in providing quality, innovative and cost-effective laser system solutions for our customers' needs in national defense, aerospace and medical applications. For more information about Aculight, please contact Dr. Andrew Brown, director of business development, at (425) 482-1100 or visit www.aculight.com.

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