DURECT Corporation and Cardinal Health Announce Collaboration to Research And Develop Long Acting Gel-Cap Products Using the SABER(TM) Delivery System

CUPERTINO, Calif., Mar 27, 2002 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ — DURECT Corporation (Nasdaq: DRRX) announced today a collaboration with Cardinal Health (NYSE: CAH) Pharmaceutical Technologies and Services Center, Inc. to explore the feasibility of producing long acting soft gelatin based oral products, using the SABER(TM) technology as core formulations. The technology has the potential of greatly expanding the utility of the soft gelatin capsule dosage form in improving patient therapy through reduced dosing frequency and side effects.

R.P. Scherer Corporation, a subsidiary of Cardinal Health, is a leading developer and manufacturer of soft-gelatin capsules, rapid-dissolving tablets and other drug delivery systems. R.P. Scherer has been involved in the design of unique drug-delivery systems and related manufacturing technologies for nearly a dozen of the top 100 pharmaceuticals. R.P. Scherer's soft-gel technology is used in products such as Advil(R), Liqui-Gels(TM) and other products.

The SABER system is a patented controlled release technology developed by Southern BioSystems, a wholly owned subsidiary of DURECT Corporation. This technology is based on sucrose acetate isobutyrate (SAIB), a high viscosity biodegradable liquid matrix, which is the basis for DURECT's injectable depot, and oral gel cap technology.

"Since pioneering the commercialization of soft-gel technology in the 1930s, the name R.P. Scherer has almost become synonymous with soft-gels," stated Felix Theeuwes, Chairman and Chief Scientific Officer of DURECT. "We see this collaboration and combination of SABER and gel cap technologies as a significant potential commercialization opportunity."

"The advantages of the soft gelatin capsule dosage form in reliably and predictably delivering drugs to improve therapy now has the potential to provide even better and safer drug therapy through the controlled release of the drug through the SABER system," stated George Fotiades, President and Chief Operating Officer, Pharmaceutical Technology and Services, Cardinal Health.

About DURECT:

DURECT Corporation (www.www.durect.com) is pioneering the development and commercialization of pharmaceutical systems for the treatment of chronic debilitating diseases and enabling biotechnology-based pharmaceutical products. DURECT's pharmaceutical systems combine technology innovations from the medical device and drug delivery industries with proprietary pharmaceutical and biotechnology drug formulations. These capabilities can enable new drug therapies or optimize existing therapies based on a broad range of compounds, including small molecule pharmaceuticals as well as biotechnology molecules such as proteins, peptides and genes. DURECT focuses on the treatment of chronic

diseases including pain, CNS disorders, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

R.P. Scherer of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, is wholly owned by Cardinal Health and has a global network of 15 manufacturing facilities and 3,600 employees in 11 countries. Its presence on five continents uniquely positions the company to serve its more than 2,000 clients.

About Cardinal Health:

Cardinal Health, Inc. (www.cardinal.com) is a leading provider of products and services supporting the healthcare industry. Cardinal companies develop, manufacture, package and market products for patient care; develop drug-delivery technologies; distribute pharmaceuticals, medical-surgical and laboratory supplies; and offer consulting and other services that improve quality and efficiency in health care. The company, which is headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, employs more than 49,000 people on five continents and produces annual revenues of more than $45 billion.

The statements in this press release regarding DURECT's products in development, expected product benefits, product development plans or potential product markets are forward-looking statements involving risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those in such forward-looking statements. Potential risks and uncertainties include, but are not limited to, DURECT's ability to research, develop, manufacture and commercialize its products, obtain product and manufacturing approvals from regulatory agencies, manage its growth and expenses, finance its activities and operations, as well as marketplace acceptance of DURECT's products. Further information regarding these and other risks is included in DURECT's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on January 11, 2002, Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2001 filed with the SEC on November 13, 2001, and Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2000 filed with the SEC on March 30, 2001, under the heading "Factors that may affect future results."

SOURCE DURECT Corporation

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