

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact Information:

Name: Karla Gonye

Phone: 800-394-4493 x3038

Email: Karla.Gonye@AthenaDiagnostics.com

Danielle Eccleston

617-275-6552

Deccleston@greenoughcom.com

Athena Diagnostics Offers Genetic Test for Diagnosing Spinal Muscular Atrophy

SMA Now Second Leading Cause of Infant Death

WORCESTER, Mass. (January 26, 2009) — Athena Diagnostics, part of Thermo Fisher Scientific, offers a comprehensive test to identify carriers and diagnose prenatal cases of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a disease that causes the degeneration of lower motor neurons and is the second leading cause of death among infants. With this advanced testing and diagnostic capability, physicians can screen couples who are planning to start a family, or who are already pregnant, for mutation in the recessive *SMN1* gene, a genetic variation that will ultimately determine if their infant will be born with SMA.

SMA ranks as the second most prevalent hereditary disease in the world, after cystic fibrosis, and the [American College of Medical Genetics](#) (ACMG) recommends that all couples should be offered testing for SMA mutations before starting a family. Currently, one in about every 50 adults, or approximately 7.5 million people, is a carrier of *SMN1* abnormal mutations, and, as a result, one in 6,000 infants are born with the genetic disease every year.

Basic carrier and prenatal testing only allow physicians to screen for the presence of an abnormal *SMN1* gene. Athena Diagnostics offers comprehensive SMA testing that enables physicians to take patients through the initial carrier testing, which screens for the presence of *SMN1* mutations and *SMN2* gene copy number count. This insight into the development and copy number of an *SMN2* gene in the infant allows physicians to predict the progression of the disease and create a treatment plan before the infant is even born.

"Infants who are tested for the *SMN2* copy number present in their genetic makeup will allow physicians to be more knowledgeable about the prognosis of the disease," said Dr. Thomas Prior, PhD, Ohio State University. "In the future, this may allow physicians time to develop a personalized patient plan and start implementing a preliminary treatment strategy. Early diagnosis is so critical, and the Athena Diagnostics test gives doctors that precious extra time to understand the early stages of a disease that affects more families than most Americans realize."

"My husband and I lost our daughter, Claire, to SMA at the age of nine months," said Deborah Heine, executive director of the Claire Altman Heine Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the implementation of pan-ethnic SMA carrier screening. "We were never offered the SMA carrier screen despite the fact that a test has existed since 1997. No one should have to discover their carrier status by having their child diagnosed with this devastating disease. It is our desire that all individuals of childbearing age should be offered SMA carrier screening so that they can make informed reproductive decisions."

To learn more about the Athena Diagnostics SMA test, please visit:

www.athenadiagnostics.com/sma.

About Athena Diagnostics

Athena Diagnostics, part of Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., is a leading provider of advanced neurological assays. As a reference laboratory dedicated to the development and commercialization of diagnostic testing for neurological disorders, Athena Diagnostics uses innovative technologies to provide physicians and other healthcare professionals with diagnostic answers that can improve the quality of healthcare for patients in a cost-effective manner.

About Thermo Fisher Scientific

Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. (NYSE: TMO) is the world leader in serving science, enabling our customers to make the world healthier, cleaner and safer. With annual revenues of \$10 billion, we have more than 30,000 employees and serve over 350,000 customers within pharmaceutical and biotech companies, hospitals and clinical diagnostic labs, universities, research institutions and government agencies, as well as environmental and industrial process control settings. Serving customers through two premier brands, Thermo Scientific and Fisher Scientific, we help solve analytical challenges from routine testing to complex research and discovery. Thermo Scientific offers customers a complete range of high-end analytical instruments as well as laboratory equipment, software, services, consumables and reagents to enable integrated laboratory workflow solutions. Fisher Scientific provides a complete portfolio of laboratory equipment, chemicals, supplies and services used in healthcare, scientific research, safety and education. Together, we offer the most convenient purchasing options to customers and continuously advance our technologies to accelerate the pace of scientific discovery, enhance value for customers and fuel growth for shareholders and employees alike. Visit www.thermofisher.com.

###