



Ginkgo Bioworks and XpresCheck Expand CDC's Traveler-Based Genomic Surveillance Program to Detect Influenza Variants

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The program is an effective early warning system for viral variants, leveraging voluntary sampling from international travelers at major U.S. airports

BOSTON and NEW YORK, Jan. 17, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Ginkgo Bioworks (NYSE: DNA) and XWELL, Inc. (Nasdaq: XWEL) today announced that they have expanded their support for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Traveler-based Genomic Surveillance [program](#) to include a pilot study monitoring influenza viruses in addition to SARS-CoV-2. The partners continue to grow the program's capabilities to provide an additional source of viral surveillance to inform the selection of influenza vaccine viruses for the forthcoming 2023-2024 flu season.

Since August 2021, the program, which is also being used to conduct surveillance for SARS-CoV-2, has delivered timely public health insights into rare and emerging SARS-CoV-2 [variants and sublineages](#) and informed responses to outbreaks and surges through an innovative public-private partnership between CDC, Concentric by Ginkgo, the biosecurity and public health unit of Ginkgo Bioworks, and XpresCheck by XWELL, Inc., a leading provider of SARS-CoV-2 testing in U.S. airports. Recognizing the [high level](#) of seasonal influenza activity this fall and winter, the program is leveraging its large-scale travel biosecurity platform to monitor influenza A and B viruses among arriving international travelers at selected U.S. airports.

"As biological threats continue to emerge, evolve, and disrupt our lives as they spread across our interconnected world, the large-scale solutions we built to respond to COVID-19 are now forming the basis for the long-term biosecurity infrastructure we need," said Matt McKnight, General Manager, Biosecurity at Ginkgo. "Traveler-based detection represents a critical early warning system that can act like a radar for a variety of potential public health threats, beginning with COVID-19 and flu. Working in close partnership with CDC and XpresCheck enables us to pursue sustainable innovation, sidestepping global cycles of crisis and complacency in public health to strengthen this badly needed radar system for the years to come."

International travelers arriving at participating airports from more than 30 countries can enroll in the program on a voluntary basis to be sampled for pathogen surveillance purposes. These samples are then tested for influenza A and B in addition to SARS-CoV-2. Samples that test positive for influenza are then shared with CDC for viral genomic sequencing, as well as culturing for further *in vitro* characterization. The resulting insights may be used to help select vaccine viruses and inform candidate vaccine development in preparation for the next flu season. Traveler-based pathogen monitoring represents a novel approach to influenza surveillance, complementing CDC's ongoing efforts by providing early insights into global trends in influenza virus evolution.

"We're building upon the foundation we established to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic to address another important public health challenge: seasonal influenza," stated Ezra Ernst, Chief Executive Officer of XpresCheck. "As we work with CDC and Concentric to expand the program's footprint and capabilities, we are providing public health officials with timely insights into pathogen evolution and setting a global standard for travel biosecurity. Thank you to those who participate."

About Ginkgo Bioworks

Ginkgo Bioworks is the leading horizontal platform for cell programming, providing flexible, end-to-end services that solve challenges for organizations across diverse markets, from food and agriculture to pharmaceuticals to industrial and specialty chemicals. Ginkgo's biosecurity and public health unit, Concentric by Ginkgo, is building global infrastructure for biosecurity to empower governments, communities, and public health leaders to prevent, detect and respond to a wide variety of biological threats. For more information, visit ginkgobioworks.com and concentricbyginkgo.com, read our [blog](#), or follow us on social media channels such as Twitter ([@Ginkgo](#) and [@ConcentricByGBW](#)), Instagram ([@GinkgoBioworks](#) and [@ConcentricByGinkgo](#)), or [LinkedIn](#).

About XWELL, Inc.

XWELL, Inc. (Nasdaq: XWEL) is a leading global health and wellness holding company operating four brands: XpresCheck®, XpresSpa®, Treat™ and HyperPointe.

- XpresSpa is a leading airport retailer of wellness services and related products, with 31 locations in 13 airports globally.
- Treat is a travel health and wellness brand and a fully integrated concept blending technology with traditional brick and mortar offerings to provide a holistic approach to physical and mental well-being for travelers, currently located in two airports.
- XpresCheck is a leading provider of COVID-19 screening and diagnostic testing in partnership with the CDC and Concentric by Ginkgo, conducting bio-surveillance monitoring in its airport locations to identify new SARS-CoV-2 variants of interest and concern as well as other pathogens entering the country from across the world.
- HyperPointe is a leading digital healthcare and data analytics relationship company serving the global healthcare industry.

Forward-Looking Statements of Ginkgo Bioworks

This press release contains certain forward-looking statements within the meaning of the federal securities laws, including statements regarding the potential success of the partnership and Ginkgo's biosecurity platform. These forward-looking statements generally are identified by the words "believe," "can," "project," "potential," "expect," "anticipate," "estimate," "intend," "strategy," "future," "opportunity," "plan," "may," "should," "will," "would," "will be," "will continue," "will likely result," and similar expressions. Forward-looking statements are predictions, projections and other statements about future events that are based on current expectations and assumptions and, as a result, are subject to risks and uncertainties. Many factors could cause actual future events to differ materially from the forward-looking statements in this press release, including but not limited to: (i) volatility in the price of Ginkgo's securities due to a variety of factors, including changes in the competitive and highly regulated industries in which Ginkgo operates and plans to operate, variations in performance across competitors, and changes in laws and regulations affecting Ginkgo's business, (ii) the ability to implement business plans, forecasts, and other expectations, and to identify and realize additional business opportunities, (iii) the risk of downturns in demand for products using synthetic biology, (iv) the unpredictability of the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and the demand for COVID-19 testing and the commercial viability of our COVID-19 testing business, (v) changes to the biosecurity industry, including due to advancements in technology, emerging competition and evolution in industry demands, standards and regulations, and (vi) our ability to realize the expected benefits of merger and acquisition transactions. The foregoing list of factors is not exhaustive. You should carefully consider the foregoing factors and the other risks and uncertainties described in the "Risk Factors" section of Ginkgo's quarterly report on Form 10-Q filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC") on November 14, 2022 and other documents filed by Ginkgo from time to time with the SEC. These filings identify and address other important risks and uncertainties that could cause actual events and results to differ materially from those contained in the forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made. Readers are cautioned not to put undue reliance on forward-looking statements, and Ginkgo assumes no obligation and does not intend to update or revise these forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise. Ginkgo does not give any assurance that it will achieve its expectations.

Forward-Looking Statements of XWELL, Inc.

This press release may contain "forward-looking" statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. These include statements preceded by, followed by or that otherwise include the words "believes," "expects," "anticipates," "estimates," "projects," "intends," "should," "seeks," "future," "continue," or the negative of such terms, or other comparable terminology. Forward-looking statements relating to expectations about future results or events are based upon information available to XWELL as of today's date and are not guarantees of the future performance of the Company, and actual results may vary materially from the results and expectations discussed. Additional information concerning these and other risks is contained in the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K, and other Securities and Exchange Commission filings (which reports were filed under the Company's former name, XpresSpa Group, Inc., prior to its previously announced name change effective October 25, 2022). All subsequent written and oral forward-looking statements concerning XWELL, or other matters and attributable to XWELL or any person acting on its behalf are expressly qualified in their entirety by the cautionary statements above. XWELL does not undertake any obligation to publicly update any of these forward-looking statements to reflect events or circumstances that may arise after the date hereof.

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