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Hybrid Microscope Wins Proto Labs' Cool Idea! Award

The Revolve merges two microscopes into one, reducing costs and freeing up valuable lab space

MAPLE PLAIN, MINN.—October 20, 2015—The developers of a hybrid microscope that merges two microscopes into one and replaces conventional eyepieces with an iPad, have been presented with the latest Proto Labs Cool Idea! Award, a service grant given to innovative companies by quick-turn manufacturer Proto Labs, Inc. (NYSE: PRLB).

In life sciences research, two types of microscopes are used — upright (for viewing glass slides) and inverted (for live samples in dishes). As a result, industry sources estimate that nearly 75 percent of labs today own both. The Revolve, developed by San Diego-based Echo Laboratories, is a hybrid microscope that transforms between these two configurations, eliminating the need to purchase two separate instruments. This frees up valuable lab space and offers cost savings, given that the Revolve costs about the same price as a traditional, research-grade microscope.

Developers have also replaced traditional microscope eyepieces with an iPad, providing users with a high-resolution view through its retina display. In addition, the tablet's touch screen interface simplifies taking images, which can then be shared on cloud-based services such as Dropbox.

"This versatile microscope is a game-changer for scientists," says Proto Labs founder Larry Lukis. "Our Cool Idea! Award program seeks out innovation and this product hits the mark. It truly re-imagines and re-invents the look, the feel, the function of traditional microscopes."

Proto Labs' Cool Idea! Award grant provided machined aluminum parts for both the prototyping phase and low-volume production runs to fulfill early pre-orders for the product. Those parts included components for the microscope's XY specimen stage, a motorized LED fluorescence module and a high-precision focus drive.

The Revolve officially went on the market this month, and is being used by researchers at universities, biotechnology and pharma companies, according to Eugene Cho, CEO and founder of Echo Laboratories.

"The high-precision parts from Proto Labs helped with overall accuracy and image quality in key major sub-assemblies of the Revolve," says Cho. "These parts were essential in making our product a reality."

About Proto Labs
Proto Labs is the world's fastest digital manufacturing source for custom prototypes and low-volume production parts. The technology-enabled company uses advanced 3D printing, CNC machining

and injection molding technologies to produce parts within days. The result is an unprecedented speed-to-market value for product designers and engineers worldwide. Visit protolabs.com for more information.

About Echo Laboratories
Echo Laboratories, based in San Diego, designs and develops microscopes for life sciences professionals. The firm is led by CEO and Founder Eugene Cho, who has 15 years of experience in microscopy. The company's cornerstone product, the Revolve, combines the functionality of both upright and inverted microscopes, setting a new precedent in microscope usability and design.

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