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Allergan to Buy Swiss Maker Of Device to Treat Obesity

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Allergan Inc. said it paid \$97 million to buy EndoArt SA, a closely held Swiss company that has a technology for remotely controlling the size of a surgically implanted band around an obese patient's stomach.

Using a handheld device attached to an antenna placed outside the body on the patient's abdomen, a physician can send a signal to tighten or loosen the band. The implanted device has an antenna to facilitate telemetric communication with the external antenna.

The acquisition comes on the heels of Allergan's acquisition last year of Inamed Corp., a small medical-technology company that sells the Lap-Band gastric-banding system. The band is an increasingly popular alternative to gastric-bypass surgery for treating obesity and associated medical conditions, including high blood pressure and diabetes.

Allergan, based in Irvine, Calif., said EndoArt's remote-control technology is an advance over the Lap-Band, which is adjusted with a needle inserted into an access port under the patient's skin. There are sometimes difficulties in accessing the port, as well as port-related complications, including pain at the site and fluid leakage. Allergan said that EndoArt's technology also may be adapted to urology and gastroenterology applications.

Allergan said it will seek U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for EndoArt's gastric-banding system, which last year was approved by European regulators for use in Europe. Allergan also is establishing EndoArt's facility in Lausanne, Switzerland, as a research center for obesity-related disorders.

The acquisition underscores Allergan's commitment to obesity treatment. Some analysts had expected it to divest itself of Inamed's obesity-intervention operations because they aren't part of the aesthetics business of breast implants and facial injectables that were the main target of the

advertising campaign for the Lap-Band, which is airing nationally in the U.S. on CBS and ABC television networks, as well as on various cable stations.

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