

NEWLINK GENETICS CORP

Form 424B5

March 13, 2018

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Registration Statement No. 333-205234

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

(To Prospectus dated July 28, 2015)

Up to \$60,000,000 of Shares of
Common Stock

We have entered into a Controlled Equity OfferingSM sales agreement with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. relating to shares of our common stock offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. In accordance with the terms of the sales agreement, we may offer and sell shares of our common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, having an aggregate offering price of up to \$60,000,000 from time to time through Cantor Fitzgerald & Co., acting as agent.

Our common stock is listed on The Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol "NLNK". The last reported sale price of our common stock on The Nasdaq Global Market on March 9, 2018 was \$7.85 per share.

Sales of our common stock, if any, under this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus may be made in sales deemed to be "at-the-market" equity offerings as defined in Rule 415 promulgated under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Act. Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. is not required to sell any specific number or dollar amount of securities, but will use commercially reasonable efforts to sell on our behalf all of the shares of common stock requested to be sold by us, consistent with its normal trading and sales practices, on mutually agreed terms between Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. and us. There is no arrangement for funds to be received in any escrow, trust or similar arrangement.

Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. will be entitled to compensation at a commission rate of up to 3.0% of the gross sales price per share sold. In connection with the sale of common stock on our behalf, Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. may be deemed to be an "underwriter" within the meaning of the Securities Act, and the compensation of Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. will be deemed to be underwriting commissions or discounts. We have also agreed to provide indemnification and contribution to Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. with respect to certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act or the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act.

Investing in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. Please read "Risk Factors" beginning on page S-3 of this prospectus supplement, page 9 of the accompanying prospectus, and in the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

Prospectus Supplement, dated March 12, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prospectus Supplement

<u>About This Prospectus Supplement</u>	<u>s- ii</u>
Prospectus Supplement Summary	<u>S- 1</u>
<u>The Offering</u>	<u>S- 2</u>
<u>Risk Factors</u>	<u>S- 3</u>
Special Note Regarding <u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	<u>S- 4</u>
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	<u>S- 5</u>
Price Range of our Common Stock	<u>S- 6</u>
Dividend Policy	<u>S- 7</u>
Dilution	<u>S- 8</u>
Plan of Distribution	<u>S- 9</u>
<u>Legal Matters</u>	<u>S- 10</u>
<u>Experts</u>	<u>S- 10</u>
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	<u>S- 10</u>
<u>Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference</u>	<u>S- 10</u>

Prospectus

<u>About This Prospectus</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Prospectus Summary</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Risk Factors</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Financial Ratios</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Description of Debt Securities</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Description of Warrants</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Legal Ownership of Securities</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Legal Matters</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Experts</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Where You can Find More Information</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference</u>	<u>25</u>

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

This document is in two parts. The first part is this prospectus supplement, which describes the terms of this offering of common stock and also adds to and updates information contained in the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. The second part, the accompanying prospectus dated July 28, 2015, including the documents incorporated by reference, provides more general information about our common stock. Generally, when we refer to the prospectus, we are referring to this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus combined. To the extent there is a conflict between the information contained in this prospectus supplement, on the one hand, and the information contained in the accompanying prospectus or in any document incorporated by reference that was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, before the date of this prospectus supplement, on the other hand, you should rely on the information in this prospectus supplement. If any statement in one of these documents is inconsistent with a statement in another document having a later date—for example, a document incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus—the statement in the document having the later date modifies or supersedes the earlier statement.

Neither we nor Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. has authorized anyone to provide any information or make any representations other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. Neither we nor Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. take any responsibility for, and can provide no assurance as to the reliability of, any other information that others may give you. We are not, and Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. is not, making an offer to sell these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. You should assume that the information appearing in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, and in any free writing prospectus prepared by or on behalf of us or to which we have referred you, is accurate only as of the dates of those respective documents. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and growth prospects may have changed since those dates. You should read this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, and any free writing prospectus prepared by or on behalf of us or to which we have referred you in their entirety before making an investment decision. You should also read and consider the information in the documents we have referred you to in the sections of this prospectus supplement titled “Where You Can Find More Information” and “Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference.” Unless otherwise mentioned or unless the context indicates otherwise, all references in this prospectus and the accompanying prospectus to “NewLink,” “we,” “our,” “ours,” “us” and the “company,” or similar references mean NewLink Genetics Corporation and its consolidated subsidiaries.

NewLink Genetics® and HyperAcute® and our logo are some of our trademarks used in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, including the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, and any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. These documents also include trademarks, tradenames, and service marks that are the property of other organizations. Solely for convenience, our trademarks and tradenames referred to in these documents appear without the TM or ® symbol, but those references are not intended to indicate, in any way, that we will not assert, to the fullest extent under applicable law, our rights, or the right of the applicable licensor, to these trademarks and tradenames. Certain industry data and market data included in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference, were obtained from independent third-party surveys, market research, publicly available information, reports of governmental agencies and industry publications and surveys. Our management’s estimates presented in this prospectus are based upon management’s review of independent third-party surveys and industry publications prepared by a number of sources and other publicly available information. The market data used in this prospectus involves a number of assumptions and limitations, and you are cautioned not to give undue weight to such estimates. The industry in which we operate is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and risk due to a variety of important factors, including those described in “Risk Factors.” These and other factors could cause results to differ

materially from those expressed in the estimates made by the independent parties and by us.

s- ii

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY

The following summary highlights and includes certain basic information about us, this offering and information appearing elsewhere in this prospectus supplement, in the accompanying prospectus and in the documents we incorporate by reference. This summary is not complete and does not contain all of the information that you should consider before making an investment decision. To fully understand this offering and its consequences to you, you should read this entire prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus carefully, including the factors described under the section titled “Risk Factors” in this prospectus supplement beginning on page S-3, together with any free writing prospectus prepared by or on behalf of us or to which we have referred you and the financial statements and other information incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

Company Overview

We are a late clinical-stage immuno-oncology company focused on discovering and developing novel immunotherapeutic products for the treatment of patients with cancer. Our leading small-molecule product candidates currently in clinical development target the indoleamine-2, 3-dioxygenase, or IDO, pathway, which is one of the key pathways for cancer immune escape. These product candidates, indoximod, NLG802 (a prodrug of indoximod) and NLG919 (formerly navoximod or GDC-0919), are IDO pathway inhibitors with mechanisms of action that center around breaking the immune system’s tolerance to cancer. Additional clinical-stage product candidates in our pipeline include two product candidates that utilize our HyperAcute® Cellular Immunotherapy technology and two small molecules we acquired in 2017.

Corporate Information

We were incorporated in Delaware on June 4, 1999 and commenced operations on that date. Our principal executive office is located at 2503 South Loop Drive, Ames, Iowa 50010 and our telephone number is (515) 296-5555. Our website address is www.newlinkgenetics.com. The information contained on, or that can be accessed through, our website is not part of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. We have included our website address as an inactive textual reference only.

THE OFFERING

Common stock offered by us: Shares of common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$60,000,000.

Manner of offering: "At-the-market" offering made from time to time through our sales agent, Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. See "Plan of Distribution" beginning on page S-9 of this prospectus supplement.

Use of proceeds: We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for working capital and other general corporate purposes. See "Use of Proceeds" on page S-5.

NASDAQ Global Market Symbol: "NLNK"

Risk Factors: Investing in our common stock involves significant risks. See "Risk Factors" on page S-3 and other information included in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference, for a discussion of factors you should carefully consider before deciding whether to invest in our common stock.

S- 2

RISK FACTORS

Investing in our common stock involves significant risks, some of which are described below. You should carefully consider these risks, as well as the other information in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and any free writing prospectus authorized in connection with this offering, including documents incorporated by reference, such as our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC, and in other documents that we have filed or subsequently file with the SEC that are incorporated by reference, before deciding whether to invest in our common stock. The occurrence of any of the events or developments described below could harm our business, financial condition, results of operations and growth prospects. In such an event, the market price of our common stock could decline, and you may lose all or part of your investment. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also impair our business. In assessing the risks and uncertainties described below, you should also refer to the other information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement before making a decision to invest in our common stock, including the section titled “Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements” and our consolidated financial statements and the related notes thereto.

Risks Related to this Offering

If you purchase our common stock in this offering, you may incur immediate dilution in the book value of your investment.

Investors purchasing shares of common stock in this offering may pay a price per share that exceeds the as adjusted book value per share of our tangible assets after subtracting our liabilities. Assuming that an aggregate of 7,643,312 shares of our common stock are sold at a price of \$7.85 per share, which was the last reported sale price of our common stock on The Nasdaq Global Market on March 9, 2018, for aggregate proceeds of \$60,000,000 in this offering, and after deducting the commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us, you will experience immediate dilution of \$3.15 per share, representing the difference between the assumed offering price and our as adjusted net tangible book value as of December 31, 2017, after giving effect to this offering. See “Dilution” for a further description of the dilution that you may experience immediately after this offering.

In addition, as of December 31, 2017, we had outstanding options to purchase 7,202,221 shares of our common stock and 168,221 shares of our common stock were issuable upon vesting of outstanding restricted stock units. The exercise of any of these options or the vesting of these restricted stock units would result in additional dilution. As a result of the dilution to investors purchasing shares in this offering, investors may receive significantly less than the purchase price paid in this offering, if anything, in the event of our liquidation.

We have broad discretion in the use of the net proceeds from this offering and we may not use them effectively. Our management will have broad discretion in the application of the net proceeds from this offering, including for any of the purposes described in the section titled “Use of Proceeds,” and you will be relying on the judgment of our management regarding the application of these proceeds. You will not have the opportunity, as part of your investment decision, to assess whether the proceeds are being used appropriately. Our management might not apply the net proceeds or our existing cash in ways that ultimately increase the value of your investment. If we do not invest or apply the net proceeds from this offering or our existing cash in ways that enhance stockholder value, we may fail to achieve expected financial results, which could cause our stock price to decline. Pending their use, we intend to invest the net proceeds in short-term, interest-bearing, investment-grade securities, certificates of deposit or government securities. These investments may not yield a favorable return to our stockholders. See “Use of Proceeds.”

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents incorporated by reference and any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act and Section 21E of the Exchange Act. These statements relate to our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects, as well as our plans, objectives and expectations for our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects. Any statements contained herein that are not statements of historical facts may be deemed to be forward-looking statements. In some cases, you can identify forward-looking statements by terminology such as “aim,” “anticipate,” “assume,” “believe,” “contemplate,” “continue,” “could,” “due,” “estimate,” “expect,” “goal,” “intend,” “may,” “objective,” “plan,” “predict,” “potential,” “position,” “target,” “will,” “would,” and other similar expressions that are predictions or indicate future events and future trends, or the negative of these terms or other comparable terminology. These forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, statements about:

- our plans to develop and commercialize our product candidates, including indoximod;
- the timing of the release of data from ongoing clinical studies;
- the timing for completion of enrollment and outcomes of our ongoing clinical studies;
- the timing of and our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals for our product candidates;
- the clinical utility of our product candidates;
- our plans to leverage our existing technologies to discover and develop additional product candidates;
- our ability to quickly and efficiently identify and develop product candidates; our commercialization, marketing and manufacturing capabilities and strategy;
- our intellectual property position;
- the potential benefits of strategic collaboration agreements and our ability to enter into strategic arrangements;
- our estimates regarding expenses, future revenues, capital requirements, needs for additional financing and the period through which we anticipate the proceeds of this offering and our existing cash, cash equivalents and investments will be sufficient to enable us to fund our operations;
- our use of proceeds from this offering; and
- other risks and uncertainties, including those listed under "Risk Factors."

These forward-looking statements are based on management’s current expectations, estimates, forecasts, and projections about our business and the industry in which we operate and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors that are in some cases beyond our control. As a result, any or all of our forward-looking statements in this prospectus supplement may turn out to be inaccurate and our actual results could differ materially from those discussed in our forward-looking statements for many reasons. Factors that may cause actual results to differ materially from current expectations include, among other things, those listed under “Risk Factors” and elsewhere in this prospectus supplement. Potential investors are urged to consider these factors carefully in evaluating the forward-looking statements. You should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date of the document containing the applicable statement. Except as required by law, we assume no obligation to update these forward-looking statements publicly, or to update the reasons actual results could differ materially from those anticipated in these forward-looking statements, even if new information becomes available in the future. Given these risks and uncertainties, you are cautioned not to rely on such forward-looking statements as predictions of future events. However, you should review the factors and risks we describe in the reports we will file from time to time with the SEC after the date of this prospectus supplement. See “Where You Can Find More Information” and “Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference.”

USE OF PROCEEDS

We may issue and sell shares of our common stock having aggregate sales proceeds of up to \$60,000,000 from time to time. Because there is no minimum offering amount required as a condition to close this offering, the actual total public offering amount, commissions and proceeds to us, if any, are not determinable at this time.

Except as described in any free writing prospectus that we may authorize, we intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for working capital and other general corporate purposes. The amounts and timing of these expenditures will depend on a number of factors, such as the timing and progress of our research and development efforts, the timing and progress of any partnering efforts, technological advances and the competitive environment for our product candidates. We do not currently have specific plans or commitments with respect to the net proceeds from this offering and, accordingly, are unable to quantify the allocation of such proceeds among the various potential uses. We will have broad discretion in the way that we use the net proceeds of this offering.

S- 5

PRICE RANGE OF COMMON STOCK

Our common stock began trading on The NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol “NLNK” on November 11, 2011. Prior to that date, there was no public trading of our common stock. The following table sets forth, for the periods indicated, the high and low sales prices per share of our common stock as reported on The NASDAQ Global Market.

Year Ended December 31, 2016:	High	Low
First quarter	\$35.86	\$15.68
Second quarter	\$20.21	\$9.23
Third quarter	\$15.40	\$9.70
Fourth quarter	\$16.59	\$9.88

Year Ended December 31, 2017:	High	Low
First quarter	\$24.85	\$10.18
Second quarter	\$25.17	\$5.90
Third quarter	\$19.30	\$6.25
Fourth quarter	\$12.91	\$7.63

Year Ended December 31, 2018:	High	Low
First quarter (through March 9, 2018)	\$10.06	\$6.56

On March 9, 2018, the last reported sale price of our common stock on the NASDAQ Global Market was \$7.85 per share. As of December 31, 2017, we had 86 record holders of our common stock. The actual number of stockholders is greater than this number of record holders, and includes stockholders who are beneficial owners, but whose shares are held in street name by brokers and other nominees. This number of holders of record also does not include stockholders whose shares may be held in trust by other entities.

DIVIDEND POLICY

We have never declared or paid, and do not anticipate declaring, or paying in the foreseeable future, any cash dividends on our capital stock. Future determinations as to the declaration and payment of dividends, if any, will be at the discretion of our board of directors and will depend on then existing conditions, including our operating results, financial conditions, contractual restrictions, capital requirements, business prospects and other factors our board of directors may deem relevant.

S- 7

DILUTION

As of December 31, 2017, our net tangible book value was approximately \$151.6 million, or \$4.08 per share. Net tangible book value is total assets minus the sum of liabilities and intangible assets. Net tangible book value per share is net tangible book value divided by the total number of shares of our common stock outstanding as of December 31, 2017.

Dilution in net tangible book value per share represents the difference between the amount per share paid by purchasers of shares of our common stock in this offering and the net tangible book value per share of our common stock immediately after completion of this offering. Assuming that an aggregate of 7,643,312 shares of our common stock are sold at a price of \$7.85 per share, which was the last reported sale price of our common stock on The Nasdaq Global Market on March 9, 2018, for aggregate proceeds of \$60.0 million in this offering, and after deducting the commissions estimated offering expenses payable by us, our as adjusted net tangible book value as of December 31, 2017 would have been approximately \$210.2 million, or \$4.70 per share. This represents an immediate increase in net tangible book value of \$0.62 per share to existing stockholders and immediate dilution in net tangible book value of \$3.15 per share to investors purchasing our common stock in this offering. The following table illustrates this dilution on a per share basis:

Assumed public offering price per share	\$7.85
Net tangible book value per share as of December 31, 2017	\$4.08
Increase in net tangible book value per share attributable to this offering	\$0.62
As adjusted net tangible book value per share as of December 31, 2017 after giving effect to this offering	\$4.70
Dilution per share to investors purchasing our common stock in this offering	\$3.15

The table above assumes for illustrative purposes that an aggregate of 7,643,312 shares of our common stock are sold during the term of the sales agreement with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. at an offering price of \$7.85 per share, which was the last reported sale price of our common stock on The Nasdaq Global Market on March 9, 2018, for aggregate gross proceeds of \$60.0 million. The shares subject to the sales agreement with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. are being sold from time to time at various prices. An increase of \$0.50 per share in the price at which the shares are sold from the assumed offering price of \$7.85 per share shown in the table above, assuming all of our common stock in the aggregate amount of \$60.0 million during the term of the sales agreement with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. is sold at that price, would increase our adjusted net tangible book value per share after the offering to \$4.74 per share and would increase the dilution in net tangible book value per share to new investors in this offering to \$3.61 per share, after deducting commissions and estimated aggregate offering expenses payable by us. A decrease of \$0.50 per share in the price at which the shares are sold from the assumed offering price of \$7.85 per share shown in the table above, assuming all of our common stock in the aggregate amount of \$60.0 million during the term of the sales agreement with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. is sold at that price, would decrease our adjusted net tangible book value per share after the offering to \$4.64 per share and would decrease the dilution in net tangible book value per share to new investors in this offering to \$2.71 per share, after deducting commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us. This information is supplied for illustrative purposes only and may differ based on the actual offering price and the actual number of shares offered.

The discussion and table above are based on 37,109,556 shares of our common stock outstanding as of December 31, 2017, and excludes the following, in each case as of such date:

- 58,566 shares of our common stock held in treasury;
- 7,202,221 shares of our common stock issuable upon the exercise of outstanding stock options having a weighted-average exercise price of \$13.72 per share;
- 1,68,221 shares of our common stock subject to vesting of restricted stock units;
- 1,195,358 shares of our common stock reserved for future issuance under our 2009 Equity Incentive Plan, as well as any automatic increases in the number of shares of our common stock reserved for future issuance under this plan; and
- 1,01,996 shares of our common stock reserved for future issuance under our 2010 Employee Stock Purchase Plan.

To the extent that any of these shares are issued upon exercise of outstanding options, vesting of restricted stock units or otherwise, investors purchasing our common stock in this offering may experience further dilution. In addition, we may choose to raise additional capital due to market conditions or strategic considerations even if we believe we have sufficient funds for our current or future operating plans. To the extent that we raise additional capital through the sale of equity or convertible debt securities, the issuance of these securities could result in further dilution to our stockholders.

S- 8

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We have entered into a Controlled Equity OfferingSM Sales Agreement, or the Sales Agreement, with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co., or Cantor, under which we may offer and sell shares of our common stock having an aggregate gross sales price of up to \$60,000,000 from time to time through Cantor, acting as agent. The Sales Agreement has been filed as an exhibit to a report filed under the Exchange Act and incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement.

Upon delivery of a placement notice and subject to the terms and conditions of the Sales Agreement, Cantor may sell our common stock by any method permitted by law deemed to be an “at-the-market” offering as defined in Rule 415 promulgated under the Securities Act. We may instruct Cantor not to sell common stock if the sales cannot be effected at or above the price designated by us from time to time. We or Cantor may suspend the offering of common stock upon notice and subject to other conditions.

We will pay Cantor commissions for its services in acting as agent in the sale of common stock. Cantor will be entitled to compensation at a commission rate of up to 3.0% of the gross sales price per share sold. Because there is no minimum offering amount required as a condition to close this offering, the actual total public offering amount, commissions and proceeds to us, if any, are not determinable at this time. We have also agreed to reimburse Cantor for certain specified expenses, including the fees and disbursements of its legal counsel in an amount not to exceed \$50,000. We estimate that the total expenses for the offering, excluding compensation and reimbursements payable to Cantor under the terms of the Sales Agreement, will be approximately \$200,000.

Settlement for sales of common stock will occur on the third business day following the date on which any sales are made, or on some other date that is agreed upon by us and Cantor in connection with a particular transaction, in return for payment of the net proceeds to us. Sales of our common stock as contemplated in this prospectus will be settled through the facilities of The Depository Trust Company or by such other means as we and Cantor may agree upon. There is no arrangement for funds to be received in an escrow, trust or similar arrangement.

Cantor will use its commercially reasonable efforts, consistent with its normal trading and sales practices, to solicit offers to purchase the common stock shares under the terms and subject to the conditions set forth in the Sales Agreement. Cantor will act as sales agent on a commercially reasonable efforts basis. In connection with the sale of the common stock on our behalf, Cantor may be deemed to be an “underwriter” within the meaning of the Securities Act and the compensation of Cantor may be deemed to be underwriting commissions or discounts. We have agreed to provide indemnification and contribution to Cantor against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act.

The offering pursuant to the Sales Agreement will terminate upon the earlier of (i) the sale of all shares of our common stock subject to the Sales Agreement, or (ii) termination of the Sales Agreement as permitted therein. We and Cantor may each terminate the sales agreement at any time upon ten days’ prior notice.

Cantor and its affiliates may in the future provide various investment banking, commercial banking and other financial services for us and our affiliates, for which services they may in the future receive customary fees. To the extent required by Regulation M, Cantor will not engage in any market making activities involving our common stock while the offering is ongoing under this prospectus supplement.

This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus may be made available on a website maintained by Cantor and Cantor may distribute this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus electronically.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the shares of common stock offered in this prospectus supplement is being passed upon for us by Cooley LLP, Broomfield, Colorado. Cantor is being represented in connection with this offering by Latham & Watkins LLP, San Diego, California.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements of NewLink Genetics Corporation as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2017, and management's assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2017 have been incorporated by reference herein in reliance upon the reports of KPMG LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, incorporated by reference herein, and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We have filed with the SEC a registration statement on Form S-3 under the Securities Act, of which this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus form a part. The rules and regulations of the SEC allow us to omit from this prospectus certain information included in the registration statement. For further information about us and the securities we are offering under this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, you should refer to the registration statement and the exhibits and schedules filed with the registration statement. With respect to the statements contained in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus regarding the contents of any agreement or any other document, in each instance, the statement is qualified in all respects by the complete text of the agreement or document, a copy of which has been filed as an exhibit to the registration statement.

We file reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC under the Exchange Act. You may read and copy this information from the Public Reference Room of the SEC, 100 F Street, N.E., Room 1580, Washington, D.C. 20549, at prescribed rates. You may obtain information on the operation of the Public Reference Room by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330. The SEC also maintains an Internet website that contains reports, proxy statements and other information about issuers, like us, that file electronically with the SEC. The address of that website is www.sec.gov.

INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to "incorporate by reference" the information we file with them, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents instead of having to repeat the information in this prospectus. The documents incorporated by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus supplement, and later information that we file with the SEC will automatically update and supersede this information. We incorporate by reference the documents listed below and any future information filed (rather than furnished) with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14, or 15(d) of the Exchange Act between the date of this prospectus supplement and the termination of this offering; provided, however, that we are not incorporating any information furnished under Item 2.02 or Item 7.01 of any Current Report on Form 8-K:

- our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2017, filed with the SEC on March 5, 2018;
- our Current Reports on Form 8-K, filed with the SEC on January 8, 2018 and March 12, 2018;
- the information specifically incorporated by reference into our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2017, referred to above, from our definitive proxy statement relating to our 2017 annual meeting of stockholders, filed with the SEC on March 31, 2017; and
- the description of our common stock set forth in our registration statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on November 8, 2011, including any amendments thereto or reports filed for the purpose of updating such description.

These documents may also be accessed on our website at www.newlinkgenetics.com. Except as otherwise specifically incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, information contained in, or accessible through, our website is not a part of this prospectus supplement.

We will furnish without charge to you, on written or oral request, a copy of any or all of the documents incorporated by reference, including exhibits to these documents. You should direct any requests for documents to NewLink

Genetics Corporation, Attention: Legal Department, 2503 South Loop Drive, Ames Iowa 50010, telephone: (515) 296-5555.

S- 10

PROSPECTUS

\$250,000,000
Common Stock
Preferred Stock
Debt Securities
Warrants

From time to time, we may offer and sell up to \$250,000,000 of any combination of the securities described in this prospectus, either individually or in combination with other securities. We also may offer common stock or preferred stock upon conversion of debt securities, common stock upon conversion of preferred stock, or common stock, preferred stock or debt securities upon the exercise of warrants.

We will provide the specific terms of these offerings and securities in one or more supplements to this prospectus. We may also authorize one or more free writing prospectuses to be provided to you in connection with these offerings. The prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should carefully read this prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, as well as the documents incorporated by reference, before buying any of the securities being offered.

Our common stock is listed on The NASDAQ Global Market under the trading symbol "NLNK." On June 23, 2015, the last reported sale price of our common stock was \$46.73 per share. The applicable prospectus supplement will contain information, where applicable, as to other listings, if any, on The NASDAQ Global Market or other securities exchange of the securities covered by the applicable prospectus supplement.

INVESTING IN OUR SECURITIES INVOLVES A HIGH DEGREE OF RISK. YOU SHOULD REVIEW CAREFULLY THE RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES DESCRIBED UNDER THE HEADING "RISK FACTORS" CONTAINED IN THE APPLICABLE PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT AND IN ANY FREE WRITING PROSPECTUS WE HAVE AUTHORIZED FOR USE IN CONNECTION WITH A SPECIFIC OFFERING, AND UNDER SIMILAR HEADINGS IN THE DOCUMENTS THAT ARE INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE INTO THIS PROSPECTUS AS DESCRIBED ON PAGE 8.

THIS PROSPECTUS MAY NOT BE USED TO CONSUMMATE A SALE OF SECURITIES UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT.

The securities may be sold directly by us to investors, through agents designated from time to time or to or through underwriters or dealers, on a continuous or delayed basis. For additional information on the methods of sale, you should refer to the section entitled "Plan of Distribution" in this prospectus. If any agents or underwriters are involved in the sale of any securities with respect to which this prospectus is being delivered, the names of such agents or underwriters and any applicable fees, commissions, discounts and over-allotment options will be set forth in a prospectus supplement. The price to the public of such securities and the net proceeds we expect to receive from such sale will also be set forth in a prospectus supplement.

NEITHER THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION NOR ANY STATE SECURITIES COMMISSION HAS APPROVED OR DISAPPROVED OF THESE SECURITIES OR DETERMINED IF THIS PROSPECTUS IS TRUTHFUL OR COMPLETE. ANY REPRESENTATION TO THE CONTRARY IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE.

The date of this prospectus is July 28, 2015.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<u>About This Prospectus</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Prospectus Summary</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Risk Factors</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Financial Ratios</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Description of Debt Securities</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Description of Warrants</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Legal Ownership of Securities</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Legal Matters</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Experts</u>	<u>24</u>
Where You Can Find More Information	<u>25</u>
<u>Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference</u>	<u>25</u>

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement on Form S-3 that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, utilizing a "shelf" registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may offer and sell shares of our common stock and preferred stock, various series of debt securities and/or warrants to purchase any of such securities, either individually or in combination with other securities, in one or more offerings, up to a total dollar amount of \$250,000,000. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer.

Each time we offer securities under this prospectus, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain more specific information about the terms of that offering. We may also authorize one or more free writing prospectuses to be provided to you that may contain material information relating to these offerings. The prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you may also add, update or change any of the information contained in this prospectus or in the documents that we have incorporated by reference into this prospectus. We urge you to read carefully this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with a specific offering, together with the information incorporated herein by reference as described under the heading "Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference," before buying any of the securities being offered.

This prospectus may not be used to consummate a sale of securities unless it is accompanied by a prospectus supplement.

You should rely only on the information contained in, or incorporated by reference into, this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement, along with the information contained in any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with a specific offering. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with different or additional information. This prospectus is an offer to sell only the securities offered hereby, but only under circumstances and in jurisdictions where it is lawful to do so.

The information appearing in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus is accurate only as of the date on the front of the document and any information we have incorporated by reference is accurate only as of the date of the document incorporated by reference, regardless of the time of delivery of this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus, or any sale of a security. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects may have changed since those dates. This prospectus contains summaries of certain provisions contained in some of the documents described herein, but reference is made to the actual documents for complete information. All of the summaries are qualified in their entirety by the actual documents. Copies of some of the documents referred to herein have been filed, will be filed or will be incorporated by reference as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and you may obtain copies of those documents as described below under the section entitled "Where You Can Find More Information."

PROSPECTUS SUMMARY

This summary highlights selected information contained elsewhere in this prospectus or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, and does not contain all of the information that you need to consider in making your investment decision. You should carefully read the entire prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, including the risks of investing in our securities discussed under the heading "Risk Factors" contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, and under similar headings in the other documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus. You should also carefully read the information incorporated by reference into this prospectus, including our financial statements, and the exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

NewLink Genetics Corporation

Overview

We are a biopharmaceutical company focused on bringing novel immuno-oncology medicines to patients with cancer. Our portfolio includes biologic and small-molecule immuno-oncology product candidates intended to treat a wide range of oncology indications. Our biologic product candidates are based on our proprietary HyperAcute® immuno-oncology technology, which is designed to stimulate the human immune system. Our small-molecule product candidates are focused on breaking the immune system's tolerance to cancer. We believe that our immuno-oncology technologies have the potential to lead to multiple product candidates, targeting a wide range of oncology indications that could be used either alone or in combination with other therapies. In addition, we have licensed and are developing technologies to address infectious diseases, including our rVSV-EBOV vaccine product candidate for the Ebola virus.

Our lead product candidate, algenpantucel-L or HyperAcute Pancreas, is being studied in two randomized Phase 3 clinical trials. The first trial, IMPRESS (IMmunotherapy for Pancreatic REsectable cancer Survival Study) has completed enrollment of 722 patients with surgically resected pancreatic cancer and is being performed under a Special Protocol Assessment, or SPA, with the United States Food and Drug Administration, or the FDA. A second Phase 3 trial, PILLAR (Pancreatic Immunotherapy with algenpantucel-L for Locally Advanced non-Resectable disease), is currently enrolling patients. We initiated these trials based on encouraging Phase 2 data that suggest potential to improve both disease-free and overall survival. Algenpantucel-L has received Fast Track and Orphan Drug designations from the FDA and Orphan Medicinal Product designation from the European Commission for the adjuvant treatment of patients with surgically-resected pancreatic cancer. The primary endpoint for our IMPRESS trial with algenpantucel-L for patients with surgically-resected pancreatic cancer is overall survival. As determined by the SPA, the first interim analysis was conducted when 222 deaths were reported for the study, which occurred during the first quarter of 2014. As part of this planned interim analysis, the independent data safety monitoring committee, or DSMC, met to review available patient data. As anticipated, following its review, the DSMC recommended that the study should proceed as planned, without modification. The second interim analysis was completed during the second quarter of 2015. For the second interim analysis, the DSMC reviewed available patient data and recommended the study proceed without modification to final analysis. This second DSMC data analysis followed 333 patient events, as planned, and the study is powered to show an improvement in overall survival after the planned 442 events. Our additional HyperAcute product candidates in clinical development include tergenpumatucl-L or HyperAcute Lung, dorgenmeltucel-L or HyperAcute Melanoma, and other potential indications. To date, our HyperAcute immuno-oncology platform product candidates have been administered to more than 700 patients with cancer, either as a monotherapy or in combination with other treatments and have been shown to be generally well tolerated with limited grade 3/4 adverse events.

Our HyperAcute immuno-oncology platform consists of novel biologic products designed to stimulate the patient's immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells. HyperAcute product candidates are composed of human cancer cell lines that are tumor specific, but not patient specific. These cells have been modified to express alpha-Gal, a carbohydrate for which humans have preexisting immunity. These alpha-Gal-modified cancer cells stimulate a human immune response against cancer cells. The objective of HyperAcute immunotherapies is to elicit an antitumor response by "educating" the immune system to attack a patient's own cancer cells. HyperAcute

immunotherapies do not require any tissue from individual patients and use intact whole cells rather than cell fragments or purified proteins. We believe these unique properties of HyperAcute products have the potential to result in the stimulation of a robust immune response.

4

In addition to our HyperAcute platform, we have an active drug discovery and clinical development program focused on the IDO (indoleamine-2,3-dioxygenase) and TDO (tryptophan-2,3-dioxygenase) pathways. Our IDO/TDO pathway inhibitors represent a key class of immune checkpoint inhibitors that we believe have the potential to be breakthrough approaches to cancer therapy. In October 2014, we entered into an exclusive worldwide license and collaboration agreement with Genentech, Inc., a member of the Roche Group, or Genentech, for the development and commercialization of GDC-0919, one of the Company's IDO pathway inhibitors, and a research collaboration for the discovery of next generation IDO and TDO pathway inhibitors, or the Genentech Agreement. Under the terms of the Genentech Agreement, we received an upfront non-refundable payment of \$150 million in November 2014. We may be eligible to receive in excess of \$1 billion in milestone payments based on achievement of certain predetermined milestones as well as escalating double-digit royalties on potential commercial sales of multiple products by Genentech. Genentech will fund future research, development, manufacturing and commercialization costs. Genentech will also provide us research funding for support of the research collaboration. We will continue to pursue development activities associated with NLG919 in combination with our novel HyperAcute vaccine platform. We retain the option for co-promotion rights for NLG919 and potential next generation IDO/TDO compounds in the U.S.

Our proprietary IDO pathway inhibitor, indoximod, is in multiple Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials for the treatment of patients with breast, prostate, pancreas, melanoma and brain cancers.

Our small molecule IDO pathway inhibitor drug candidates are designed to counteract immunosuppressive effects of the IDO pathway, a fundamental mechanism regulating immune response. IDO pathway inhibitors are another class of immune checkpoint inhibitors akin to the recently developed antibodies targeting CTLA-4, PD-1 and PD-L1 that represent potential breakthrough approaches to cancer therapy. The IDO pathway regulates immune response by suppressing T-cell activation which enables local tumor immune escape. Recent studies have demonstrated that the IDO pathway is active in many cancers, both within tumor cells as a direct defense against T-cell attack, and also within antigen presenting cells in tumor draining lymph nodes whereby this pathway promotes peripheral tolerance to tumor associated antigens (TAAs). When hijacked by developing cancers in this manner, the IDO pathway may facilitate the survival, growth, invasion and metastasis of malignant cells whose expression of TAAs might otherwise be recognized and attacked by the immune system. We have a number of active programs directed at synthesizing inhibitors that are potential anti-cancer compounds and which could function individually or in combination with IDO inhibition.

Our infectious disease business researches and develops vaccines to control the spread of emerging lethal viruses and infectious diseases, improve the efficacy of existing vaccines and provide rapid-response prophylactic and therapeutic treatment for pathogens most likely to enter the human population through pandemics or acts of bioterrorism. We have two core technologies, each of which can be leveraged into the infectious disease or biodefense fields.

The first technology is a replication-competent recombinant vesicular stomatitis virus, or rVSV, an advanced vaccine technology developed for the Ebola and Marburg viruses. The rVSV-EBOV vaccine candidate was originally developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada and utilizes the rVSV vector to induce immunity against Ebola and Marburg viruses when replacing the VSV glycoprotein with corresponding glycoproteins from filoviruses. In November 2014, we entered into an exclusive, worldwide license and collaboration agreement, or the Merck Agreement, with Merck, Sharpe and Dohme Corp., or Merck, to develop and potentially commercialize our rVSV-EBOV (Ebola) vaccine product candidate. Under the Merck Agreement, we received an upfront payment of \$30 million in October 2014, and in February 2015 we received a milestone payment of \$20 million. We have the potential to earn royalties on sales of the vaccine in certain countries, if the vaccine is approved and if Merck successfully commercializes it. Clinical trials have begun in West Africa which have the potential to develop the data necessary to support the approval of our Ebola vaccine product candidate by the FDA.

The second technology is our HyperAcute platform, which we are using to focus on enhancing vaccines for infectious diseases. We have been investigating HyperAcute recombinant vaccine product candidates using H1N1, H5N1 and H7N9 influenza viruses in animal experiments. Other HyperAcute recombinant infectious disease

vaccines are currently under investigation.

5

Our profits in the first three months of 2015 were primarily the result of a \$20 million milestone payment from Merck in February 2015 and the recognition of deferred income related to large payments received in connection with the Genentech and Merck licensing transactions we entered into in 2014. We do not expect any similar transactions in 2015. We expect our losses to increase over the next several years as we advance our product candidates through late-stage clinical trials, pursue regulatory approval of our product candidates, and expand our commercialization activities in anticipation of one or more of our product candidates receiving marketing approval. On October 25, 2011, we filed a Certificate of Amendment of our Restated Certificate of Incorporation with the Secretary of State of Delaware effecting a 2.1-for-one reverse split of our common stock. All share and per share amounts have been retroactively restated where applicable in the accompanying financial statements and notes for all periods presented.

Company Information

We were incorporated in Delaware on June 4, 1999 and commenced operations on that date. Our principal executive office is located at 2503 South Loop Drive, Ames, Iowa 50010 and our telephone number is (515) 296-5555. Our website address is www.newlinkgenetics.com. The information contained on, or that can be accessed through, our website is not part of this prospectus.

NewLink Genetics® and HyperAcute® are registered trademarks of NewLink Genetics Corporation. This prospectus may also include other registered and unregistered trademarks of NewLink Genetics Corporation and other persons. Registered trademarks and tradenames may appear in this prospectus without an accompanying "®" designation.

The Securities We May Offer

We may offer shares of our common stock and preferred stock, various series of debt securities and/or warrants to purchase any of such securities, either individually or in combination with other securities, with a total value of up to \$250,000,000 from time to time under this prospectus, together with the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, at prices and on terms to be determined by market conditions at the time of any offering. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we offer a type or series of securities under this prospectus, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will describe the specific amounts, prices and other important terms of the securities, including, to the extent applicable:

- designation or classification;
- aggregate principal amount or aggregate offering price;
- maturity date, if applicable;
- original issue discount, if any;
- rates and times of payment of interest or dividends, if any;
- redemption, conversion, exercise, exchange or sinking fund terms, if any;
- ranking;
- restrictive covenants, if any;
- voting or other rights, if any;
- conversion or exchange prices or rates, if any, and, if applicable, any provisions for changes to or adjustments in the conversion or exchange prices or rates and in the securities or other property receivable upon conversion or

exchange; and

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material or special U.S. federal income tax considerations, if any.

The applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you may also add, update or change any of the information contained in this prospectus or in the documents we have incorporated by reference. However, no prospectus supplement or free writing prospectus will offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of the effectiveness of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

6

THIS PROSPECTUS MAY NOT BE USED TO CONSUMMATE A SALE OF SECURITIES UNLESS IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY A PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT.

We may sell the securities directly to investors or to or through agents, underwriters or dealers. We, and our agents or underwriters, reserve the right to accept or reject all or part of any proposed purchase of securities. If we do offer securities to or through agents or underwriters, we will include in the applicable prospectus supplement:

- the names of those agents or underwriters;
- applicable fees, discounts and commissions to be paid to them;
- details regarding over-allotment options, if any; and
- the net proceeds to us.

Common Stock. We may issue shares of our common stock from time to time. The holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote for each share held of record on all matters submitted to a vote of stockholders. Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any outstanding shares of preferred stock, the holders of common stock are entitled to receive ratably such dividends as may be declared by our board of directors out of legally available funds. Upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of our common stock are entitled to share ratably in all assets remaining after payment of liabilities and the liquidation preferences of any outstanding shares of preferred stock. Holders of common stock have no preemptive rights and no right to convert their common stock into any other securities. There are no redemption provisions applicable to our common stock. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the common stock under “Description of Capital Stock-Common Stock.” We urge you, however, to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to any common stock being offered.

Preferred Stock. We may issue shares of our preferred stock from time to time, in one or more series. Under our certificate of incorporation, our board of directors has the authority to designate up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock, \$0.01 par value per share, in one or more series and to fix the privileges, preferences and rights of each series of preferred stock, any or all of which may be greater than the rights of the common stock. If we sell any new series of preferred stock under this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement, our board of directors will determine the designations, voting powers, preferences and rights of the preferred stock being offered, as well as the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, conversion rights, preemptive rights, terms of redemption or repurchase, liquidation preferences, sinking fund terms and the number of shares constituting any series or the designation of any series. Preferred stock may be convertible into our common stock or other securities of ours, or may be exchangeable for debt securities. Conversion may be mandatory or at the holder’s option and would be at prescribed conversion rates. We will file as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from reports that we file with the SEC, the form of the certificate of designation that describes the terms of the series of preferred stock that we are offering before the issuance of the related series of preferred stock. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the preferred stock under “Description of Capital Stock-Preferred Stock.” We urge you, however, to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to the series of preferred stock being offered, as well as the complete certificate of designation that contains the terms of the applicable series of preferred stock.

Debt Securities. We may issue debt securities from time to time, in one or more series, as either senior or subordinated debt or as senior or subordinated convertible debt. The senior debt securities will rank at least equally with any other unsecured and unsubordinated debt. The subordinated debt securities will be subordinate and junior in right of payment, to the extent and in the manner described in the instrument governing the debt, to all of our senior indebtedness. Convertible debt securities will be convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or our other securities. Conversion may be mandatory or at the holder's option and would be at prescribed conversion rates.

The debt securities will be issued under an indenture that we will enter into with a national banking association or other eligible party, as trustee. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the debt securities under "Description of Debt Securities." We urge you, however, to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to the series of debt securities being offered, as well as the complete indenture and any supplemental indentures that contain the terms of the debt securities. We have filed the form of indenture as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and supplemental indentures and forms of debt securities containing the terms of the debt securities being offered will be filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part or will be incorporated by reference from reports that we file with the SEC.

Warrants. We may issue warrants for the purchase of common stock, preferred stock and/or debt securities in one or more series. We may issue warrants independently or in combination with common stock, preferred stock and/or debt securities. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the warrants under “Description of Warrants.” We urge you, however, to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to the particular series of warrants being offered, as well as the form of warrant and/or the warrant agreement and warrant certificate, as applicable, that contain the terms of the warrants. We have filed the forms of the warrant agreements and forms of warrant certificates containing the terms of the warrants that we may offer as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. We will file as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from reports that we file with the SEC, the form of warrant and/or the warrant agreement and warrant certificate, as applicable, that contain the terms of the particular series of warrants we are offering, and any supplemental agreements, before the issuance of such warrants.

Warrants may be issued under a warrant agreement that we enter into with a warrant agent. We will indicate the name and address of the warrant agent, if any, in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to a particular series of warrants.

RISK FACTORS

An investment in our securities involves a high degree of risk. Before you make a decision to invest in our securities, you should consider carefully the risks described in the section entitled "Risk Factors" contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC, as well as any amendment or update thereto reflected in subsequent filings with the SEC or in any Current Report on Form 8-K we may file. If any of these risks actually occur, our business, operating results, prospects or financial condition could be materially and adversely affected. This could cause the trading price of our securities to decline and you may lose part or all of your investment. Moreover, the risks described are not the only ones that we face. Additional risks not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also affect our business, operating results, prospects or financial condition.

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus, any prospectus supplement (or any free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be delivered to you) and the documents we have filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference herein contain "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Act, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act. These statements relate to future events or to our future operating or financial performance and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors which may cause our actual results, performance or achievements to be materially different from any future results, performances or achievements expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements. All statements, other than statement of historical fact, are forward-looking statements, including, but not limited to, statements about:

- our plans to develop and commercialize our product candidates;
- our ongoing and planned preclinical studies and clinical trials, including the outcomes of both our Phase 3 clinical trials for our algenpantucel-L cancer immunotherapy;
- the timing of completion of enrollment and outcomes of our other ongoing clinical studies;
- the timing of and our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals for our product candidates;
- the clinical utility of any future products;
- our plans to leverage our existing technologies to discover and develop additional product candidates;
- our ability to quickly and efficiently identify and develop product candidates;
- our commercialization, marketing and manufacturing capabilities and strategy;
- our intellectual property position;
- the potential benefits of strategic collaboration agreements and our ability to enter into strategic arrangements; and
- our estimates regarding expenses, future revenues, capital requirements and needs for additional financing.

In some cases, you can identify forward-looking statements by terms such as "may," "will," "should," "could," "would," "expects," "plans," "anticipates," "believes," "estimates," "projects," "predicts," "potential," or the negative of these terms or other similar expressions intended to identify forward-looking statements, although not all forward-looking statements contain these identifying words. These statements reflect our current views with respect to future events, are based on assumptions and are subject to substantial risks and uncertainties. Given these uncertainties, you should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. Discussions containing these forward-looking statements may be found, among other places, under the heading "Risk Factors" contained in the applicable prospectus supplement, in any free writing prospectus we may authorize for use in connection with a specific offering, and under the heading "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operation" in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and in our most recent Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q, and under the heading "Business" in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K as well as any amendments to the foregoing reflected in subsequent filings with the SEC, each incorporated by reference herein in its entirety. Also, these forward-looking statements represent our estimates and assumptions only as of the date of the document

containing the applicable statement. If our forward-looking statements prove to be inaccurate, the inaccuracy may be material. Unless required by law, we undertake no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements to reflect new information or future events or developments. Thus, you should not assume that our silence over time means that actual events are bearing out as expressed or implied in such forward-looking statements. You should read this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement, together with the documents we have filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize for use in connection with this offering, completely and with the understanding that our

9

actual future results may be materially different from what we expect. We qualify all of the forward-looking statements in the foregoing documents by these cautionary statements.

FINANCIAL RATIOS

Our net losses were inadequate to cover fixed charges for years ended 2010 through 2013. Accordingly, the following table sets forth the dollar amount of the coverage deficiency. In the years that ended with a deficiency, ratio information is not applicable. Amounts shown are in thousands.

	Year Ended December 31,				Three
	2010	2011	2012	2013	Months Ended March 31, 2015
Ratio of earnings to fixed charges(1)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	276x 101x
Coverage deficiency	\$ (16,031)	\$ (17,845)	\$ (23,047)	\$ (30,762)	\$ —

(1) The ratio of earnings to fixed charges was computed by dividing earnings by fixed charges. For this purpose, earnings are defined as pre-tax income or loss from continuing operations plus fixed charges. Fixed charges consist of interest expense, amortization of debt discount, and an estimate of the amount of interest included in rental expense (calculated as one third of rent expense).

USE OF PROCEEDS

Except as described in any applicable prospectus supplement or in any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with a specific offering, we currently intend to use the net proceeds from the sale of the securities under this prospectus, if any, for working capital and general corporate purposes, including regulatory, clinical trial, research and development, pre-commercial, general and administrative and manufacturing expenses. We will set forth in the prospectus supplement applicable to a specific offering our intended use for the net proceeds received from the sale of any securities in that offering.

The amounts and timing of our use of the net proceeds from any offerings hereunder will depend on a number of factors, such as the timing and progress of our research and development efforts, the timing of regulatory approval of our product candidates, if any, the timing and progress of any partnering and collaboration efforts, technological advances and the competitive environment for our product candidates. As of the date of this prospectus, we cannot specify with certainty all of the particular uses for the net proceeds to us from offerings hereunder. Accordingly, our management will have broad discretion in the timing and application of these proceeds. Pending application of the net proceeds as described above, we intend to temporarily invest the proceeds in short-term, interest-bearing instruments.

DESCRIPTION OF SECURITIES

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

General

As of the date of this prospectus, our amended and restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, or the Restated Certificate, authorizes us to issue 75,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, and 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.01 per share. As of June 25, 2015, 28,642,600 shares of common stock were outstanding and no shares of preferred stock were outstanding. On October 25, 2011, we effected a reverse stock split of our common stock, whereby each 2.1 outstanding shares of our common stock were combined into one share of our common stock. All share numbers and prices per share in this prospectus, other than descriptions of historical issuances, reflect the consummation of such reverse stock split.

The following summary description of our capital stock is based on the provisions of our Restated Certificate, our amended and restated bylaws, or the Bylaws, and applicable provisions of the General Corporation Law of the State of Delaware, or the Delaware General Corporation Law. This information may not be complete in all respects and is qualified entirely by reference to the applicable provisions of our Restated Certificate, our Bylaws and the Delaware General Corporation Law. For information on how to obtain copies of our Restated Certificate and Bylaws, which are exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, see "Where You Can Find More Information."

Common Stock

Voting Rights. Each holder of common stock is entitled to one vote for each share held of record on all matters submitted to a vote of the stockholders, including the election of directors, other than any amendment to the Restated Certificate that relates solely to the terms of one or more outstanding series of preferred stock, except as otherwise required by law. Our Restated Certificate and our Bylaws do not provide for cumulative voting rights. Because of this, the holders of a majority of the shares of common stock entitled to vote in any election of directors can elect all of the directors standing for election, if they should so choose.

Dividends. Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any then outstanding preferred stock, the holders of common stock are entitled to receive ratably such dividends, if any, as may be declared from time to time by our board of directors out of legally available funds.

Liquidation. In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of common stock will be entitled to share ratably in the net assets legally available for distribution to stockholders after the payment of all of our debts and other liabilities and the satisfaction of any liquidation preference granted to the holders of any then outstanding shares of preferred stock.

Rights and Preferences. Holders of common stock have no preemptive, conversion, subscription or other rights, and there are no redemption or sinking fund provisions applicable to the common stock. The rights, preferences and privileges of the holders of common stock are subject to and may be adversely affected by, the rights of the holders of shares of any series of preferred stock that we may designate in the future.

Fully paid and Nonassessable. All of our outstanding shares of common stock are, and the shares of common stock to be issued in this offering will be, upon our receipt of the purchase price for such shares, fully paid and nonassessable.

Preferred Stock

Pursuant to our Restated Certificate, our board of directors has the authority, without further action by our stockholders, to issue up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock, \$0.01 par value per share, in one or more series, to establish from time to time the number of shares to be included in each such series, and to determine or alter for each

such series the voting powers, full or limited, or no voting powers, and the designations, preferences and relative participating, optional or other rights and the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, conversion rights, preemptive rights, terms of redemption and repurchase, liquidation preferences and sinking fund terms, any or all of which may be greater than the rights of the common stock. Preferred stock may be convertible into our common stock or other securities of ours, or may be exchangeable for debt securities. Conversion may be mandatory or at the holder's option and would be at prescribed conversion

11

rates. Because our board of directors, without stockholder approval, can issue preferred stock with voting, conversion or other rights, preferred stock could be issued quickly with terms calculated to delay or prevent a change in control of our company or make removal of management more difficult. Additionally, the issuance of preferred stock may have the effect of decreasing the market price of the common stock and may adversely affect the voting power of holders of common stock and reduce the likelihood that common stockholders will receive dividend payments and payments upon liquidation.

Our board of directors will fix the rights, preferences, privileges, qualifications and restrictions of the preferred stock of each series that we sell under this prospectus and applicable prospectus supplements in the certificate of designation relating to that series. We will file as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from reports that we file with the SEC, the form of any certificate of designation that describes the terms of the series of preferred stock we are offering before the issuance of the related series of preferred stock. This description will include, if applicable:

- the title and stated value;
 - the number of shares we are offering;
 - the liquidation preference per share;
 - the purchase price per share;
 - the dividend rate per share, dividend period and payment dates and method of calculation for dividends;
 - whether dividends will be cumulative or non-cumulative and, if cumulative, the date from which dividends will accumulate;
 - our right, if any, to defer payment of dividends and the maximum length of any such deferral period;
 - the procedures for any auction and remarketing, if any;
 - the provisions for a sinking fund, if any;
 - the provisions for redemption or repurchase, if applicable, and any restrictions on our ability to exercise those redemption and repurchase rights;
 - any listing of the preferred stock on any securities exchange or market;
 - whether the preferred stock will be convertible into our common stock or other securities of ours, including warrants, and, if applicable, the conversion period, the conversion price, or how it will be calculated, and under what circumstances it may be adjusted;
 - whether the preferred stock will be exchangeable for debt securities, and, if applicable, the exchange period, the exchange price, or how it will be calculated, and under what circumstances it may be adjusted;
 - voting rights, if any, of the preferred stock;
 - preemptive rights, if any;
 - restrictions on transfer, sale or other assignment, if any;
 - a discussion of any material or special United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the preferred stock;
 - the relative ranking and preferences of the preferred stock as to dividend rights and rights if we liquidate, dissolve or wind up our affairs;
 - any limitations on issuances of any class or series of preferred stock ranking senior to or on a parity with the series of preferred stock being issued as to dividend rights and rights if we liquidate, dissolve or wind up our affairs; and
 - any other specific terms, rights, preferences, privileges, qualifications or restrictions of the preferred stock.
- When we issue shares of preferred stock under this prospectus, upon our receipt of the purchase price for such shares, the shares will be fully paid and nonassessable and will not have, or be subject to, any preemptive or similar rights. Unless we specify otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the preferred stock will rank, with respect to dividends and upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up:
- senior to all classes or series of our common stock and to all of our equity securities ranking junior to the preferred stock;
 - on a parity with all of our equity securities the terms of which specifically provide that the equity securities rank on a parity with the preferred stock; and
 - junior to all of our equity securities the terms of which specifically provide that the equity securities rank senior to the

preferred stock.

The term "equity securities" does not include convertible debt securities.

The Delaware General Corporation Law provides that the holders of any class or series of preferred stock will have the right to vote separately as a class on any proposed amendment to the Restated Certificate that would alter or change the powers, preferences or special rights of the holders of such class or series of preferred stock so as to affect them adversely. This right is in addition to any voting rights that may be provided for in the applicable certificate of designation.

Stock Options and Restricted Stock Units

As of June 25, 2015, there were 8,722,134 shares of common stock reserved for issuance under our equity incentive, non-employee director stock award and employee stock purchase plans. Of this number, 5,517,866 shares were reserved for issuance upon exercise of outstanding options and 223,249 shares were reserved for issuance upon the vesting of outstanding restricted stock units.

Anti-Takeover Effects of Provisions of Delaware Law and Our Charter Documents

Charter Documents. Our Restated Certificate and Bylaws contain provisions that could discourage potential takeover attempts and that could delay or prevent changes in control or our management, which could adversely affect the market place of our common stock.

Among other things, our Restated Certificate and our Bylaws provide for the following:

Our board of directors may issue up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock, with such rights, preferences and privileges as the board of directors may designate, including the right to approve an acquisition or other change in our control.

The personal liability for monetary damages of our directors to us and to our stockholders is limited to the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, including, without limitation, the Delaware General Corporation Law. This provision may reduce the likelihood of derivative litigation against directors and may discourage or deter stockholders or management from bringing a lawsuit against directors for breach of their fiduciary duty.

Special meetings of stockholders may only be called by the board of directors pursuant to a resolution adopted by a majority of the total number of authorized directors, the chairman of the board of directors, or the chief executive officer. In addition, our Bylaws establish procedures, including requirements for advance written notice and the form and content for stockholder notices, with regard to the nomination of candidates for election as directors and stockholder proposals. These provisions may delay or preclude stockholders from bringing matters before a meeting of stockholders or from making nominations for directors at a meeting of stockholders, which could delay or deter takeover attempts or changes in management.

The board of directors is divided into three classes of directors, with each class serving staggered three-year terms. As a result, approximately one-third of the board of directors will be elected each year. The classified board provision could have the effect of discouraging a third party from making a tender offer or attempting to obtain control of us. In addition, the classified board provision could delay stockholders who do not agree with the policies of the board of directors from removing a majority of the board of directors for two years.

Our Restated Certificate does not provide for cumulative voting for our directors. The absence of cumulative voting may make it more difficult for stockholders owning less than a majority of our stock to elect any directors to our board of directors. In addition, directors may be removed only for cause, and removal requires the affirmative vote of the holders of 66 2/3% of our voting stock.

Subject to the rights of the holders of any outstanding series of our preferred stock, all vacancies, including newly created directorships, may, except as otherwise required by law, be filled only by the affirmative vote of a majority of our directors then in office, even if less than a quorum, unless the board of directors determines by resolution that any such vacancies will be filled by the stockholders. In addition, the authorized number of directors may be changed only by resolution of our board of directors.

Stockholders are permitted to amend our Bylaws only upon receiving at least 66 2/3% of the votes entitled to be cast by holders of all outstanding shares then entitled to vote generally in the election of directors, voting together as a

single class.

Delaware Law. We are subject to Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law. Section 203 generally prohibits a public Delaware corporation such as us from engaging in a "business combination" with an "interested stockholder" for a period of three years following the time that the stockholder became an interested stockholder, unless:

13

prior to the time the stockholder became an interested stockholder, the board of directors of the corporation approved either the business combination or the transaction which resulted in the stockholder becoming an interested stockholder;

upon consummation of the transaction which resulted in the stockholder becoming an interested stockholder, the interested stockholder owned at least 85% of the voting stock of the corporation outstanding at the time the transaction commenced, excluding for purposes of determining the number of shares of voting stock outstanding (a) shares owned by persons who are directors and also officers and (b) employee stock plans in which employee participants do not have the right to determine confidentially whether shares held subject to the plan will be tendered in a tender or exchange offer; or

at or subsequent to the time the stockholder became an interested stockholder, the business combination is approved by the board of directors of the corporation and authorized at an annual or special meeting of stockholders, and not by written consent, by the affirmative vote of at least 66 2/3% of the outstanding voting stock which is not owned by the interested stockholder.

For purposes of Section 203, a “business combination” is defined broadly to include a merger, asset or stock sale, or other transaction resulting in a financial benefit to the interested stockholder. In general and subject to certain exceptions, Section 203 defines an interested stockholder as any entity or person beneficially owning, together with his or her affiliates or associates, 15% or more of the outstanding voting stock of the corporation.

Although Section 203 permits us to elect not to be governed by its provisions, we have not made this election. As a result of the application of Section 203, potential acquirers of us may be discouraged from attempting to effect an acquisition transaction with us, thereby possibly depriving holders of our securities of certain opportunities to sell or otherwise dispose of such securities at above-market prices pursuant to such transactions.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for the common stock is Computershare Shareowners Services, LLC. The transfer agent for any series of preferred stock that we may offer under this prospectus will be named and described in the prospectus supplement for that series.

Listing on the NASDAQ Global Market

Our common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol “NLNK.”

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

We may issue debt securities from time to time, in one or more series, as either senior or subordinated debt or as senior or subordinated convertible debt. While the terms we have summarized below will apply generally to any debt securities that we may offer under this prospectus, we will describe the particular terms of any debt securities that we may offer in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement. The terms of any debt securities offered under a prospectus supplement may differ from the terms described below. Unless the context requires otherwise, whenever we refer to the indenture, we also are referring to any supplemental indentures that specify the terms of a particular series of debt securities.

We will issue the debt securities under the indenture that we will enter into with the trustee named in the indenture. The indenture will be qualified under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, or the Trust Indenture Act. We have filed the form of indenture as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and supplemental indentures and forms of debt securities containing the terms of the debt securities being offered will be filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part or will be incorporated by reference from reports that we file with the SEC.

The following summary of material provisions of the debt securities and the indenture is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, all of the provisions of the indenture applicable to a particular series of debt securities. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplements and any related free writing prospectuses related to the debt securities that we may offer under this prospectus, as well as the complete indenture that contains the terms of the debt

securities.

14

General

The indenture does not limit the amount of debt securities that we may issue. It provides that we may issue debt securities up to the principal amount that we may authorize and may be in any currency or currency unit that we may designate. Except for the limitations on consolidation, merger and sale of all or substantially all of our assets contained in the indenture, the terms of the indenture do not contain any covenants or other provisions designed to give holders of any debt securities protection against changes in our operations, financial condition or transactions involving us.

We may issue the debt securities issued under the indenture as “discount securities,” which means they may be sold at a discount below their stated principal amount. These debt securities, as well as other debt securities that are not issued at a discount, may be issued with “original issue discount,” or OID, for U.S. federal income tax purposes because of interest payment and other characteristics or terms of the debt securities. Material U.S. federal income tax considerations applicable to debt securities issued with OID will be described in more detail in any applicable prospectus supplement.

We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms of the series of debt securities being offered, including:

- the title of the series of debt securities;
- any limit upon the aggregate principal amount that may be issued;
 - the maturity date or dates;
- the form of the debt securities of the series;
- the applicability of any guarantees;
- whether or not the debt securities will be secured or unsecured, and the terms of any secured debt;
- whether the debt securities rank as senior debt, senior subordinated debt, subordinated debt or any combination thereof, and the terms of any subordination;
- if the price (expressed as a percentage of the aggregate principal amount thereof) at which such debt securities will be issued is a price other than the principal amount thereof, the portion of the principal amount thereof payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof, or if applicable, the portion of the principal amount of such debt securities that is convertible into another security or the method by which any such portion shall be determined;
- the interest rate or rates, which may be fixed or variable, or the method for determining the rate and the date interest will begin to accrue, the dates interest will be payable and the regular record dates for interest payment dates or the method for determining such dates;
- our right, if any, to defer payment of interest and the maximum length of any such deferral period;
- if applicable, the date or dates after which, or the period or periods during which, and the price or prices at which, we may, at our option, redeem the series of debt securities pursuant to any optional or provisional redemption provisions and the terms of those redemption provisions;
- the date or dates, if any, on which, and the price or prices at which we are obligated, pursuant to any mandatory sinking fund or analogous fund provisions or otherwise, to redeem, or at the holder's option to purchase, the series of debt securities and the currency or currency unit in which the debt securities are payable;
- the denominations in which we will issue the series of debt securities, if other than denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof;
- any and all terms, if applicable, relating to any auction or remarketing of the debt securities of that series and any security for our obligations with respect to such debt securities and any other terms which may be advisable in connection with the marketing of debt securities of that series;
- whether the debt securities of the series shall be issued in whole or in part in the form of a global security or securities; the terms and conditions, if any, upon which such global security or securities may be exchanged in whole or in part for other individual securities; and the depository for such global security or securities;
- if applicable, the provisions relating to conversion or exchange of any debt securities of the series and the terms and conditions upon which such debt securities will be so convertible or exchangeable, including the conversion or exchange price, as applicable, or how it will be calculated and may be adjusted, any mandatory or optional (at our

option or the holders' option) conversion or exchange features, the applicable conversion or exchange period and the manner of settlement for any conversion or exchange;

• if other than the full principal amount thereof, the portion of the principal amount of debt securities of the series which shall be payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof;

• additions to or changes in the covenants applicable to the particular debt securities being issued, including, among others, the consolidation, merger or sale covenant;

• additions to or changes in the events of default with respect to the securities and any change in the right of the trustee or the holders to declare the principal, premium, if any, and interest, if any, with respect to such securities to be due and payable;

15

- additions to or changes in or deletions of the provisions relating to covenant defeasance and legal defeasance;
- additions to or changes in the provisions relating to satisfaction and discharge of the indenture;
- additions to or changes in the provisions relating to the modification of the indenture both with and without the consent of holders of debt securities issued under the indenture;
- the currency of payment of debt securities if other than U.S. dollars and the manner of determining the equivalent amount in U.S. dollars;
- whether interest will be payable in cash or additional debt securities at our or the holders' option and the terms and conditions upon which the election may be made;
- the terms and conditions, if any, upon which we will pay amounts in addition to the stated interest, premium, if any and principal amounts of the debt securities of the series to any holder that is not a "United States person" for federal tax purposes;
- any restrictions on transfer, sale or assignment of the debt securities of the series; and
- any other specific terms, preferences, rights or limitations of, or restrictions on, the debt securities, any other additions or changes in the provisions of the indenture, and any terms that may be required by us or advisable under applicable laws or regulations.

Conversion or Exchange Rights

We will set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms on which a series of debt securities may be convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or our other securities. We will include provisions as to settlement upon conversion or exchange and whether conversion or exchange is mandatory, at the option of the holder or at our option. We may include provisions pursuant to which the number of shares of our common stock or our other securities that the holders of the series of debt securities receive would be subject to adjustment.

Consolidation, Merger or Sale

Unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, the indenture will not contain any covenant that restricts our ability to merge or consolidate, or sell, convey, transfer or otherwise dispose of our assets as an entirety or substantially as an entirety. However, any successor to or acquirer of such assets (other than a subsidiary of ours) must assume all of our obligations under the indenture or the debt securities, as appropriate.

Events of Default under the Indenture

Unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, the following are events of default under the indenture with respect to any series of debt securities that we may issue:

- if we fail to pay any installment of interest on any series of debt securities, as and when the same shall become due and payable, and such default continues for a period of 90 days; provided, however, that a valid extension of an interest payment period by us in accordance with the terms of any indenture supplemental thereto shall not constitute a default in the payment of interest for this purpose;
- if we fail to pay the principal of, or premium, if any, on any series of debt securities as and when the same shall become due and payable whether at maturity, upon redemption, by declaration or otherwise, or in any payment required by any sinking or analogous fund established with respect to such series; provided, however, that a valid extension of the maturity of such debt securities in accordance with the terms of any indenture supplemental thereto shall not constitute a default in the payment of principal or premium, if any;
- if we fail to observe or perform any other covenant or agreement contained in the debt securities or the indenture, other than a covenant specifically relating to another series of debt securities, and our failure continues for 90 days after we receive written notice of such failure, requiring the same to be remedied and stating that such is a notice of default thereunder, from the trustee or holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of the applicable series; and
- if specified events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization occur.

If an event of default with respect to debt securities of any series occurs and is continuing, other than an event of default specified in the last bullet point above, the trustee or the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, by notice to us in writing, and to the trustee if notice is given by such holders, may declare the unpaid principal of, premium, if any, and accrued interest, if any, due and payable immediately. If an event of default specified in the last bullet point above occurs with respect to us, the principal amount of and accrued interest, if any, of each issue of debt securities then outstanding shall be due and payable without any notice or other action on the part of the trustee or any holder.

The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of an affected series may waive any default or event of default with respect to the series and its consequences, except defaults or events of default regarding payment of principal, premium, if any, or interest, unless we have cured the default or event of default in accordance with the indenture. Any waiver shall cure the default or event of default.

Subject to the terms of the indenture, if an event of default under an indenture shall occur and be continuing, the trustee will be under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under such indenture at the request or direction of any of the holders of the applicable series of debt securities, unless such holders have offered the trustee reasonable indemnity. The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee, or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee, with respect to the debt securities of that series, provided that:

- the direction so given by the holder is not in conflict with any law or the applicable indenture; and
- subject to its duties under the Trust Indenture Act, the trustee need not take any action that might involve it in personal liability or might be unduly prejudicial to the holders not involved in the proceeding.

A holder of the debt securities of any series will have the right to institute a proceeding under the indenture or to appoint a receiver or trustee, or to seek other remedies only if:

- the holder has given written notice to the trustee of a continuing event of default with respect to that series;
- the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series have made written request;
- such holders have offered to the trustee indemnity satisfactory to it against the costs, expenses and liabilities to be incurred by the trustee in compliance with the request; and

the trustee does not institute the proceeding, and does not receive from the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series other conflicting directions within 90 days after the notice, request and offer.

These limitations do not apply to a suit instituted by a holder of debt securities if we default in the payment of the principal, premium, if any, or interest on, the debt securities.

We will periodically file statements with the trustee regarding our compliance with specified covenants in the indenture.

Modification of Indenture; Waiver

We and the trustee may change an indenture without the consent of any holders with respect to specific matters:

- to cure any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency in the indenture or in the debt securities of any series;
- to comply with the provisions described above under “Description of Debt Securities-Consolidation, Merger or Sale;”
- to provide for uncertificated debt securities in addition to or in place of certificated debt securities;
- to add to our covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions such new covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions for the benefit of the holders of all or any series of debt securities, to make the occurrence, or the occurrence and the continuance, of a default in any such additional covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions an event of default or to surrender any right or power conferred upon us in the indenture;
- to add to, delete from or revise the conditions, limitations, and restrictions on the authorized amount, terms, or purposes of issue, authentication and delivery of debt securities, as set forth in the indenture;
- to make any change that does not adversely affect the interests of any holder of debt securities of any series in any material respect;
- to provide for the issuance of and establish the form and terms and conditions of the debt securities of any series as provided above under “Description of Debt Securities-General” to establish the form of any certifications required to be furnished pursuant to the terms of the indenture or any series of debt securities, or to add to the rights of the holders of any series of debt securities;
- to evidence and provide for the acceptance of appointment under any indenture by a successor trustee; or

to comply with any requirements of the SEC in connection with the qualification of any indenture under the Trust Indenture Act.

17

In addition, under the indenture, the rights of holders of a series of debt securities may be changed by us and the trustee with the written consent of the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series that is affected. However, unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, we and the trustee may make the following changes only with the consent of each holder of any outstanding debt securities affected:

- extending the fixed maturity of any debt securities of any series;
- reducing the principal amount, reducing the rate of or extending the time of payment of interest, or reducing any premium payable upon the redemption of any series of any debt securities; or
- reducing the percentage of debt securities, the holders of which are required to consent to any amendment, supplement, modification or waiver.

Discharge

Each indenture provides that we can elect to be discharged from our obligations with respect to one or more series of debt securities, except for specified obligations, including obligations to:

- provide for payment;
- register the transfer or exchange of debt securities of the series;
- replace stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities of the series;
- pay principal of and premium and interest on any debt securities of the series;
- maintain paying agencies;
- hold monies for payment in trust;
- recover excess money held by the trustee;
- compensate and indemnify the trustee; and
- appoint any successor trustee.

In order to exercise our rights to be discharged, we must deposit with the trustee money or government obligations sufficient to pay all the principal of, any premium, if any, and interest on, the debt securities of the series on the dates payments are due.

Form, Exchange and Transfer

We will issue the debt securities of each series only in fully registered form without coupons and, unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, in denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof. The indenture provides that we may issue debt securities of a series in temporary or permanent global form and as book-entry securities that will be deposited with, or on behalf of, The Depository Trust Company, or DTC, or another depository named by us and identified in the applicable prospectus supplement with respect to that series. To the extent the debt securities of a series are issued in global form and as book-entry, a description of terms relating to any book-entry securities will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement.

At the option of the holder, subject to the terms of the indenture and the limitations applicable to global securities described in the applicable prospectus supplement, the holder of the debt securities of any series can exchange the debt securities for other debt securities of the same series, in any authorized denomination and of like tenor and aggregate principal amount.

Subject to the terms of the indenture and the limitations applicable to global securities set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the debt securities may present the debt securities for exchange or for registration of transfer, duly endorsed or with the form of transfer endorsed thereon duly executed if so required by us or the security registrar, at the office of the security registrar or at the office of any transfer agent designated by us for this purpose. Unless otherwise provided in the debt securities that the holder presents for transfer or exchange, we will impose no service charge for any registration of transfer or exchange, but we may require payment of any taxes or other governmental charges.

We will name in the applicable prospectus supplement the security registrar, and any transfer agent in addition to the security registrar, that we initially designate for any debt securities. We may at any time designate additional transfer

agents or rescind the designation of any transfer agent or approve a change in the office through which any transfer agent acts, except that we will be required to maintain a transfer agent in each place of payment for the debt securities of each series.

If we elect to redeem the debt securities of any series, we will not be required to:

18

issue, register the transfer of, or exchange any debt securities of that series during a period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before the day of mailing of a notice of redemption of any debt securities that may be selected for redemption and ending at the close of business on the day of the mailing; or register the transfer of or exchange any debt securities so selected for redemption, in whole or in part, except the unredeemed portion of any debt securities we are redeeming in part.

Information Concerning the Trustee

The trustee, other than during the occurrence and continuance of an event of default under an indenture, undertakes to perform only those duties as are specifically set forth in the applicable indenture. Upon an event of default under an indenture, the trustee must use the same degree of care as a prudent person would exercise or use in the conduct of his or her own affairs. Subject to this provision, the trustee is under no obligation to exercise any of the powers given it by the indenture at the request of any holder of debt securities unless it is offered reasonable security and indemnity against the costs, expenses and liabilities that it might incur.

Payment and Paying Agents

Unless we otherwise indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will make payment of the interest on any debt securities on any interest payment date to the person in whose name the debt securities, or one or more predecessor securities, are registered at the close of business on the regular record date for the interest.

We will pay principal of and any premium and interest on the debt securities of a particular series at the office of the paying agents designated by us, except that unless we otherwise indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will make interest payments by check that we will mail to the holder or by wire transfer to certain holders. Unless we otherwise indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will designate the corporate trust office of the trustee as our sole paying agent for payments with respect to debt securities of each series. We will name in the applicable prospectus supplement any other paying agents that we initially designate for the debt securities of a particular series. We will maintain a paying agent in each place of payment for the debt securities of a particular series.

All money we pay to a paying agent or the trustee for the payment of the principal of or any premium or interest on any debt securities that remains unclaimed at the end of two years after such principal, premium or interest has become due and payable will be repaid to us, and the holder of the debt security thereafter may look only to us for payment thereof.

Governing Law

The indenture and the debt securities will be governed by and construed in accordance with the internal laws of the State of New York, except to the extent that the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 is applicable.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

The following description, together with the additional information we may include in any applicable prospectus supplements, summarizes the material terms and provisions of the warrants that we may offer under this prospectus and the related warrant agreements and warrant certificates. While the terms summarized below will apply generally to any warrants that we may offer, we will describe the particular terms of any series of warrants in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement. If we indicate in the prospectus supplement, the terms of any warrants offered under that prospectus supplement may differ from the terms described below. However, no prospectus supplement shall fundamentally change the terms that are set forth in this prospectus or offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of its effectiveness. Specific warrant agreements will contain additional important terms and provisions and will be incorporated by reference as an exhibit to the registration statement that includes this prospectus or as an exhibit to a report that we file with the SEC.

General

We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms of the series of warrants, including:

- the offering price and aggregate number of warrants offered;
- the currency for which the warrants may be purchased;

if applicable, the designation and terms of the securities with which the warrants are issued and the number of warrants issued with each such security or each principal amount of such security;

19

- if applicable, the date on and after which the warrants and the related securities will be separately transferable;
- in the case of warrants to purchase debt securities, the principal amount of debt securities purchasable upon exercise of one warrant and the price at, and currency in which, this principal amount of debt securities may be purchased upon such exercise;
- in the case of warrants to purchase common stock or preferred stock, the number of shares of common stock or preferred stock, as the case may be, purchasable upon the exercise of one warrant and the price at which these shares may be purchased upon such exercise;
- the effect of any merger, consolidation, sale or other disposition of our business on the warrant agreements and the warrants;
- the terms of any rights to redeem or call the warrants;
- any provisions for changes to or adjustments in the exercise price or number of securities issuable upon exercise of the warrants;
- the dates on which the right to exercise the warrants will commence and expire;
- the manner in which the warrant agreements and warrants may be modified;
- any material or special U.S. federal income tax consequences of holding or exercising the warrants;
- the terms of the securities issuable upon exercise of the warrants; and
- any other specific terms, preferences, rights or limitations of or restrictions on the warrants.

Before exercising their warrants, holders of warrants will not have any of the rights of holders of the securities purchasable upon such exercise, including:

- in the case of warrants to purchase debt securities, the right to receive payments of principal of, or premium, if any, or interest on, the debt securities purchasable upon exercise or to enforce covenants in the applicable indenture; or
- in the case of warrants to purchase common stock or preferred stock, the right to receive dividends, if any, or payments upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up or to exercise voting rights, if any.

Exercise of Warrants

Each warrant will entitle the holder to purchase the securities that we specify in the applicable prospectus supplement at the exercise price that we describe in the applicable prospectus supplement. Unless we otherwise specify in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the warrants may exercise the warrants at any time up to 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time on the expiration date that we set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. After the close of business on the expiration date, unexercised warrants will become void.

Holders of the warrants may exercise the warrants by delivering the warrant certificate representing the warrants to be exercised together with specified information, and paying the required amount to the warrant agent in immediately available funds, as provided in the applicable prospectus supplement. We will set forth on the reverse side of the warrant certificate and in the applicable prospectus supplement the information that the holder of the warrant will be required to deliver to the warrant agent.

Upon receipt of the required payment and the warrant certificate properly completed and duly executed at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent or any other office indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will issue and deliver the securities purchasable upon such exercise. If fewer than all of the warrants represented by the warrant certificate are exercised, then we will issue a new warrant certificate for the remaining amount of warrants. If we so indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the warrants may surrender securities as all or part of the exercise price for warrants.

Enforceability of Rights by Holders of Warrants

Each warrant agent will act solely as our agent under the applicable warrant agreement and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust with any holder of any warrant. A single bank or trust company may act as warrant agent for more than one issue of warrants. A warrant agent will have no duty or responsibility in case of any default by us under the applicable warrant agreement or warrant, including any duty or responsibility to initiate

any proceedings at law or otherwise, or to make any demand upon us. Any holder of a warrant may, without the consent of the related warrant agent or the holder of any other warrant, enforce by appropriate legal action its right to exercise, and receive the securities purchasable upon exercise of, its warrants.

LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES

We can issue securities in registered form or in the form of one or more global securities. We describe global securities in greater detail below. We refer to those persons who have securities registered in their own names on the books that we or any applicable trustee, depositary or warrant agent maintain for this purpose as the "holders" of those securities. These persons are the legal holders of the securities. We refer to those persons who, indirectly through others, own beneficial interests in securities that are not registered in their own names, as "indirect holders" of those securities. As we discuss below, indirect holders are not legal holders, and investors in securities issued in book-entry form or in street name will be indirect holders.

Book-Entry Holders

We may issue securities in book-entry form only, as we will specify in the applicable prospectus supplement. This means securities may be represented by one or more global securities registered in the name of a financial institution that holds them as depositary on behalf of other financial institutions that participate in the depositary's book-entry system. These participating institutions, which are referred to as participants, in turn, hold beneficial interests in the securities on behalf of themselves or their customers.

Only the person in whose name a security is registered is recognized as the holder of that security. Securities issued in global form will be registered in the name of the depositary or its participants. Consequently, for securities issued in global form, we will recognize only the depositary as the holder of the securities, and we will make all payments on the securities to the depositary. The depositary passes along the payments it receives to its participants, which in turn pass the payments along to their customers who are the beneficial owners. The depositary and its participants do so under agreements they have made with one another or with their customers; they are not obligated to do so under the terms of the securities.

As a result, investors in a book-entry security will not own securities directly. Instead, they will own beneficial interests in a global security, through a bank, broker or other financial institution that participates in the depositary's book-entry system or holds an interest through a participant. As long as the securities are issued in global form, investors will be indirect holders, and not holders, of the securities.

Street Name Holders

We may terminate a global security or issue securities in non-global form. In these cases, investors may choose to hold their securities in their own names or in "street name." Securities held by an investor in street name would be registered in the name of a bank, broker or other financial institution that the investor chooses, and the investor would hold only a beneficial interest in those securities through an account he or she maintains at that institution.

For securities held in street name, we will recognize only the intermediary banks, brokers and other financial institutions in whose names the securities are registered as the holders of those securities, and we will make all payments on those securities to them. These institutions pass along the payments they receive to their customers who are the beneficial owners, but only because they agree to do so in their customer agreements or because they are legally required to do so. Investors who hold securities in street name will be indirect holders, not holders, of those securities.

Legal Holders

Our obligations, as well as the obligations of any applicable trustee and of any third parties employed by us or a trustee, run only to the legal holders of the securities. We do not have obligations to investors who hold beneficial interests in global securities, in street name or by any other indirect means. This will be the case whether an investor chooses to be an indirect holder of a security or has no choice because we are issuing the securities only in global form.

For example, once we make a payment or give a notice to the holder, we have no further responsibility for the payment or notice even if that holder is required, under agreements with depositary participants or customers or by law, to pass it along to the indirect holders but does not do so. Similarly, we may want to obtain the approval of the

holders to amend an indenture, to relieve us of the consequences of a default or of our obligation to comply with a particular provision of the indenture or for other purposes. In such an event, we would seek approval only from the holders, and not the indirect holders, of the securities. Whether and how the holders contact the indirect holders is up to the holders.

Special Considerations for Indirect Holders

If you hold securities through a bank, broker or other financial institution, either in book-entry form or in street name, you should check with your own institution to find out:

the performance of third party service providers;

- how it handles securities payments and notices;
- whether it imposes fees or charges;
- how it would handle a request for the holders' consent, if ever required;
- whether and how you can instruct it to send you securities registered in your own name so you can be a holder, if that is permitted in the future;
- how it would exercise rights under the securities if there were a default or other event triggering the need for holders to act to protect their interests; and
- if the securities are in book-entry form, how the depositary's rules and procedures will affect these matters.

Global Securities

A global security is a security that represents one or any other number of individual securities held by a depositary. Generally, all securities represented by the same global securities will have the same terms.

Each security issued in book-entry form will be represented by a global security that we deposit with and register in the name of a financial institution or its nominee that we select. The financial institution that we select for this purpose is called the depositary. Unless we specify otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, DTC will be the depositary for all securities issued in book-entry form.

A global security may not be transferred to or registered in the name of anyone other than the depositary, its nominee or a successor depositary, unless special termination situations arise. We describe those situations below under the section entitled "Special Situations When a Global Security Will Be Terminated" in this prospectus. As a result of these arrangements, the depositary, or its nominee, will be the sole registered owner and holder of all securities represented by a global security, and investors will be permitted to own only beneficial interests in a global security. Beneficial interests must be held by means of an account with a broker, bank or other financial institution that in turn has an account with the depositary or with another institution that does. Thus, an investor whose security is represented by a global security will not be a holder of the security, but only an indirect holder of a beneficial interest in the global security.

If the prospectus supplement for a particular security indicates that the security will be issued in global form only, then the security will be represented by a global security at all times unless and until the global security is terminated. If termination occurs, we may issue the securities through another book-entry clearing system or decide that the securities may no longer be held through any book-entry clearing system.

Special Considerations for Global Securities

The rights of an indirect holder relating to a global security will be governed by the account rules of the investor's financial institution and of the depositary, as well as general laws relating to securities transfers. We do not recognize an indirect holder as a holder of securities and instead deal only with the depositary that holds the global security.

If securities are issued only in the form of a global security, an investor should be aware of the following:

- an investor cannot cause the securities to be registered in his or her name, and cannot obtain non-global certificates for his or her interest in the securities, except in the special situations we describe below;
- an investor will be an indirect holder and must look to his or her own bank or broker for payments on the securities and protection of his or her legal rights relating to the securities, as we describe above;
- an investor may not be able to sell interests in the securities to some insurance companies and to other institutions that are required by law to own their securities in non-book-entry form;
- an investor may not be able to pledge his or her interest in a global security in circumstances where certificates representing the securities must be delivered to the lender or other beneficiary of the pledge in order for the pledge to be effective;
- the depositary's policies, which may change from time to time, will govern payments, transfers, exchanges and other matters relating to an investor's interest in a global security;
- we and any applicable trustee have no responsibility for any aspect of the depositary's actions or for its records of ownership interests in a global security, nor do we or any applicable trustee supervise the depositary in any way;

the depositary may, and we understand that DTC will, require that those who purchase and sell interests in a global security within its book-entry system use immediately available funds, and your broker or bank may require you to do so as well; and

financial institutions that participate in the depositary's book-entry system, and through which an investor holds its interest in a global security, may also have their own policies affecting payments, notices and other matters relating to the securities.

There may be more than one financial intermediary in the chain of ownership for an investor. We do not monitor and are not responsible for the actions of any of those intermediaries.

Special Situations When a Global Security Will Be Terminated

In a few special situations described below, the global security will terminate and interests in it will be exchanged for physical certificates representing those interests. After that exchange, the choice of whether to hold securities directly or in street name will be up to the investor. Investors must consult their own banks or brokers to find out how to have their interests in securities transferred to their own name, so that they will be direct holders. We have described the rights of holders and street name investors above.

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the global security will terminate when the following special situations occur:

- if the depositary notifies us that it is unwilling, unable or no longer qualified to continue as depositary for that global security and we do not appoint another institution to act as depositary within 90 days;
- if we notify any applicable trustee that we wish to terminate that global security; or
- if an event of default has occurred with regard to securities represented by that global security and has not been cured or waived.

The applicable prospectus supplement may also list additional situations for terminating a global security that would apply only to the particular series of securities covered by the applicable prospectus supplement. When a global security terminates, the depositary, and not we or any applicable trustee, is responsible for deciding the names of the institutions that will be the initial direct holders.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities from time to time pursuant to underwritten public offerings, negotiated transactions, block trades or a combination of these methods. We may sell the securities to or through underwriters or dealers, through agents, or directly to one or more purchasers. We may distribute securities from time to time in one or more transactions:

- at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed;
- at market prices prevailing at the time of sale;
- at prices related to such prevailing market prices; or
- at negotiated prices.

A prospectus supplement or supplements (and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) will describe the terms of the offering of the securities, including, to the extent applicable:

- the name or names of the underwriters, if any;
- the purchase price of the securities or other consideration therefor, and the proceeds, if any, we will receive from the sale;
- any over-allotment options under which underwriters may purchase additional securities from us;
- any agency fees or underwriting discounts and other items constituting agents' or underwriters' compensation;
- any public offering price;
- any discounts or concessions allowed or reallowed or paid to dealers; and
- any securities exchange or market on which the securities may be listed.

Only underwriters named in the prospectus supplement will be underwriters of the securities offered by the prospectus supplement.

If underwriters are used in the sale, they will acquire the securities for their own account and may resell the securities from time to time in one or more transactions at a fixed public offering price or at varying prices determined at the time of sale. The obligations of the underwriters to purchase the securities will be subject to the conditions set forth in the applicable underwriting agreement. We may offer the securities to the public through underwriting syndicates represented by managing underwriters or by underwriters without a syndicate. Subject to certain conditions, the underwriters will be obligated to purchase all of the securities offered by the prospectus supplement, other than securities covered by any over-allotment option. Any public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers may change from time to time. We may use underwriters with whom we have a material relationship. We will describe in the prospectus supplement, naming the underwriter, the nature of any such relationship.

We may sell securities directly or through agents we designate from time to time. We will name any agent involved in the offering and sale of securities and we will describe any commissions we will pay the agent in the prospectus supplement. Unless the prospectus supplement states otherwise, our agent will act on a best-efforts basis for the period of its appointment.

We may authorize agents or underwriters to solicit offers by certain types of institutional investors to purchase securities from us at the public offering price set forth in the prospectus supplement pursuant to delayed delivery contracts providing for payment and delivery on a specified date in the future. We will describe the conditions to these contracts and the commissions we must pay for solicitation of these contracts in the prospectus supplement.

We may provide agents and underwriters with indemnification against civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or contribution with respect to payments that the agents or underwriters may make with respect to these liabilities. Agents and underwriters may engage in transactions with, or perform services for, us in the ordinary course of business.

All securities we may offer, other than common stock, will be new issues of securities with no established trading market. Any underwriters may make a market in these securities, but will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue any market making at any time without notice. We cannot guarantee the liquidity of the trading markets for any securities.

Any underwriter may engage in over-allotment, stabilizing transactions, short-covering transactions and penalty bids in accordance with Regulation M under the Exchange Act. Over-allotment involves sales in excess of the offering size, which create a short position. Stabilizing transactions permit bids to purchase the underlying security so long as the stabilizing bids do not exceed a specified maximum price. Syndicate-covering or other short-covering transactions involve purchases of the securities, either through exercise of the over-allotment option or in the open market after the distribution is completed, to cover short positions. Penalty bids permit the underwriters to reclaim a selling concession from a dealer when the securities originally sold by the dealer are purchased in a stabilizing or covering transaction to cover short positions. Those activities may cause the price of the securities to be higher than it would otherwise be. If commenced, the underwriters may discontinue any of the activities at any time.

Any underwriters that are qualified market makers on The NASDAQ Global Market may engage in passive market making transactions in the common stock on The NASDAQ Global Market in accordance with Regulation M under the Exchange Act, during the business day prior to the pricing of the offering, before the commencement of offers or sales of the common stock. Passive market makers must comply with applicable volume and price limitations and must be identified as passive market makers. In general, a passive market maker must display its bid at a price not in excess of the highest independent bid for such security; if all independent bids are lowered below the passive market maker's bid, however, the passive market maker's bid must then be lowered when certain purchase limits are exceeded. Passive market making may stabilize the market price of the securities at a level above that which might otherwise prevail in the open market and, if commenced, may be discontinued at any time.

In compliance with guidelines of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, or FINRA, the maximum consideration or discount to be received by any FINRA member or independent broker dealer may not exceed 8% of the aggregate amount of the securities offered pursuant to this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement.

LEGAL MATTERS

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the validity of the securities offered by this prospectus, and any supplement thereto, will be passed upon for us by Cooley LLP, Broomfield, Colorado.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements of NewLink Genetics Corporation and subsidiaries as of December 31, 2014 and 2013, and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2014, and management's assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2014 have been incorporated by reference herein in reliance

24

upon the report of KPMG LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, incorporated by reference herein, and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

This prospectus is part of the registration statement on Form S-3 we filed with the SEC under the Securities Act. You should rely only on the information contained in this prospectus or incorporated by reference. We have not authorized anyone else to provide you with different information. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front page of this prospectus, regardless of the time of delivery of this prospectus or any sale of our securities. Whenever a reference is made in this prospectus to any of our contracts, agreements or other documents, the reference may not be complete and you should refer to the exhibits that are a part of the registration statement or the exhibits to the reports or other documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus for a copy of such contract, agreement or other document. Because we are subject to the information and reporting requirements of the Exchange Act, we file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. Our SEC filings are available to the public over the Internet at the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>, which contains reports, proxy and information statements, and other information regarding issuers that file electronically. You may also read and copy any document we file at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the operation of the Public Reference Room. You can find additional information about the company at our website, <http://www.newlinkgenetics.com>.

INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to "incorporate by reference" information from other documents that we file with it, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus. Information in this prospectus supersedes information incorporated by reference that we filed with the SEC prior to the date of this prospectus, while information that we file later with the SEC will automatically update and supersede the information in this prospectus. We incorporate by reference into this prospectus and the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part the information or documents listed below that we have filed with the SEC (Commission File No. 001-35342):

- our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, filed with the SEC on March 16, 2015;
- our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the three months ended March 31, 2015, filed with the SEC on May 11, 2015;
- our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on the following dates in 2015: January 6, February 19, February 26, March 13, April 17, May 5, May 6 and May 29;

the information specifically incorporated by reference into our 2014 Annual Report on Form 10-K, referred to above, from our definitive proxy statement relating to our 2015 annual meeting of stockholders, filed with the SEC on March 19, 2015; and

the description of our common stock set forth in our registration statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on November 8, 2011, including any amendments thereto or reports filed for the purpose of updating such description. We also incorporate by reference any future filings (other than current reports furnished under Item 2.02 or Item 7.01 of Form 8-K and exhibits filed on such form that are related to such items unless such Form 8-K expressly provides to the contrary) made with the SEC pursuant to Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, including those made after the date of the initial filing of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part and prior to effectiveness of such registration statement, until we file a post-effective amendment that indicates the termination of the offering of the securities covered by this prospectus and will become a part of this prospectus from the date that such documents are filed with the SEC. Information in such future filings updates and supplements the information provided in this prospectus. Any statements in any such future filings will automatically be deemed to modify and supersede any information in any document we previously filed with the SEC that is incorporated or deemed to be

incorporated herein by reference to the extent that statements in the later filed document modify or replace such earlier statements.

We will furnish without charge to you, on written or oral request, a copy of any or all of the documents incorporated by reference, including exhibits to these documents. You should direct any requests for documents to John B. Henneman, III, Chief Financial Officer, NewLink Genetics Corporation, 2503 South Loop Drive, Ames Iowa 50010, telephone: (515) 296-5555.

Up to \$60,000,000 of Shares of
Common Stock

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

March 12, 2018