

CERUS CORP
Form 424B5
January 30, 2018
Table of Contents

Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(5)
Registration No. 333-219727

This preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus relate to an effective registration statement under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, but the information in this preliminary prospectus supplement is not complete and may be changed. This preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are not an offer to sell these securities and we are not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED JANUARY 30, 2018

Preliminary Prospectus Supplement

(To Prospectus dated January 8, 2018)

\$50.0 Million

Common Stock

We are offering shares of our common stock with an aggregate offering price of \$50.0 million.

Our common stock is listed on The Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol CERS. The closing price of our common stock on The Nasdaq Global Market on January 29, 2018 was \$4.88 per share of common stock.

Investing in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. See the risks set forth under the heading Risk Factors section beginning on page S-6 of this prospectus supplement and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which is incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

The underwriter has agreed to purchase shares of common stock from us at a price of \$ _____ per share. We have granted the underwriter an option for 30 days from the date of this prospectus supplement to purchase additional shares of our common stock with an aggregate offering price of up to \$7.5 million. We estimate that the proceeds to us in this offering will be approximately \$ _____ million, or approximately \$ _____ million if the underwriter exercises

in full its option to purchase additional shares, in each case before deducting estimated offering expenses payable by us. The underwriter proposes to offer the shares of common stock from time to time for sale in one or more transactions on The Nasdaq Global Market, in the over-the-counter market, through negotiated transactions or otherwise, at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices related to prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices, subject to receipt and acceptance by it and subject to its right to reject any order in whole or in part. We have agreed to reimburse the underwriter for certain expenses in connection with this offering. See Underwriting.

Delivery of the shares of common stock is expected to be made on or about _____, 2018.

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

BTIG

Prospectus Supplement dated _____, 2018.

Table of Contents**TABLE OF CONTENTS****Prospectus Supplement**

	Page
<u>About this Prospectus Supplement and the Prospectus</u>	S-ii
<u>Prospectus Supplement Summary</u>	S-1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	S-6
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	S-9
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	S-11
<u>Dividend Policy</u>	S-11
<u>Dilution</u>	S-12
<u>Certain Material U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations For Non-U.S. Holders</u>	S-14
<u>Underwriting</u>	S-18
<u>Legal Matters</u>	S-22
<u>Experts</u>	S-22
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	S-22
<u>Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference</u>	S-23
Prospectus	

<u>About this Prospectus</u>	i
<u>Prospectus Summary</u>	1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	5
<u>Forward-looking Statements</u>	6
<u>Financial Ratios</u>	8
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	9
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	10
<u>Description of Debt Securities</u>	16
<u>Description of Warrants</u>	23
<u>Legal Ownership of Securities</u>	25
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	29
<u>Legal Matters</u>	31
<u>Experts</u>	31
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	31
<u>Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference</u>	32

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT AND THE PROSPECTUS

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 January 8, 2018, including the documents incorporated by reference therein, provides more general information. Generally, when we refer to this prospectus, we are referring to both parts of this document 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.

We have not, and the underwriter has not, authorized anyone to provide you with different information than that contained in or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or in any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. If anyone provides you with different or inconsistent information, you should not rely on it. We are not, and the underwriter 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 that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering, is accurate only as of the date of those respective documents. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and 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 that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering, in their entirety before making an investment decision. You should also read and consider the information in the documents to which we have referred you in the sections of this prospectus supplement under the headings **Where You Can Find More Information** and **Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference**.

Unless otherwise mentioned or unless the context requires otherwise, all references in this prospectus supplement to **Cerus**, **Cerus Corporation**, **we**, **us**, **our** and **the company** refer to Cerus Corporation, a Delaware corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary, Cerus Europe B.V.

Cerus, INTERCEPT and INTERCEPT Blood System are U.S. registered trademarks of Cerus Corporation. All other trademarks, service marks and trade names included or incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus are the property of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY

*This summary highlights certain information about us, this offering and selected information contained elsewhere in or incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. This summary is not complete and does not contain all of the information that you should consider before deciding whether to invest in our common stock. For a more complete understanding of our company and this offering, you should read and consider carefully the more detailed information included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, including the factors described under the heading *Risk Factors* beginning on page S-6 of this prospectus supplement and in our *Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q* for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, as well as our consolidated financial statements and notes thereto and the information included in any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering.*

Cerus Corporation

Our Business

We are a biomedical products company focused on developing and commercializing the INTERCEPT Blood System to enhance blood safety. The INTERCEPT Blood System, which is based on our proprietary technology for controlling biological replication, is designed to reduce blood-borne pathogens in donated blood components intended for transfusion.

Our INTERCEPT Blood System is for use with three blood components: plasma, platelets, and red blood cells. The INTERCEPT Blood System for platelets, or platelet system, and the INTERCEPT Blood System for plasma, or plasma system, have received a broad range of regulatory approvals, including but not limited to U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, approval in the U.S., and Class III CE marks in the European Union and other jurisdictions that recognize CE mark approval, and are being marketed and sold in a number of countries around the world, including the U.S.; certain countries in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Middle East, and Latin America and selected countries in other regions of the world. We sell both the platelet and plasma systems using our direct sales force and through distributors. The INTERCEPT Blood System for red blood cells, or the red blood cell system, is currently in clinical development. If we are unable to gain widespread commercial adoption in markets where our blood safety products are approved for commercialization, including in the U.S., we will have difficulty achieving profitability.

The red blood cell system is currently in development. In late 2014 and early 2015, we announced that both our U.S. Phase II recovery and lifespan study of the red blood cell system and our European Phase III clinical trial of the red blood cell system for acute anemia patients met their respective primary endpoints. Based on the results of the European Phase III acute anemia clinical trial, we plan to file for CE mark approval of the red blood cell system in the European Union. Our ability to complete our planned CE mark submission and the timing thereof is dependent on our satisfactory completion of development and certain chemistry, manufacturing and controls activities, which may not occur in a timely manner or at all.

In order to successfully commercialize all of our products and product candidates, we will be required to conduct significant research, development, preclinical and clinical evaluation, commercialization and regulatory compliance activities for our products and product candidates, which, together with anticipated increased selling, general and administrative expenses, are expected to result in substantial losses. Accordingly, we may never achieve a profitable level of operations in the future.

S-1

Table of Contents

Recent Developments

On January 23, 2018, we reported that the primary efficacy and safety endpoints were successfully achieved in our Phase III chronic anemia study evaluating INTERCEPT-treated red blood cells, or RBCs, in thalassemia patients, SPARC (A Randomized Controlled Study to Evaluate Efficacy and Safety of S-303 Treated Red Blood Cells in Subjects with Thalassemia Major Requiring Chronic RBC Transfusion). We believe that the results from the SPARC study provide important clinical data regarding the safety profile of INTERCEPT-treated RBCs in a chronically transfused patient population and support our upcoming CE mark submission for the red blood cell system, which is planned for the second half of 2018.

The study's primary efficacy endpoint used a non-inferiority design to assess up to a 15% relative difference in the mean consumption of hemoglobin between INTERCEPT-treated RBC and conventional RBC. The safety endpoints included the incidence of treatment-emergent antibody with confirmed specificity to INTERCEPT-treated RBCs, the incidence of antibodies to red blood cell alloantigens, the incidence of adverse events, and the incidence of transfusion reactions.

In addition to the SPARC study in thalassemia patients, our planned 2018 CE mark submission also will include previously reported clinical results from our successful European Phase III study in patients with acute anemia. In the United States, we are conducting a Phase III study of INTERCEPT-treated RBCs in Puerto Rico and the mainland to ameliorate the risk of the Zika virus, and are preparing to initiate a separate Phase III study of INTERCEPT-treated RBCs with patients undergoing complex cardiovascular surgery to support a potential Premarket Approval application submission to the Federal Drug Administration for the INTERCEPT Blood System for RBCs.

Certain Recent Preliminary Financial Results

We are finalizing our financial results as of and for the year ended December 31, 2017. Based on information and data available to us as of the date of this prospectus supplement, our product revenue for the year ended December 31, 2017 was approximately \$43.6 million, compared to product revenue of \$37.2 million for the year ended December 31, 2016. The increase in product revenue was primarily due to an increase in global sales of our INTERCEPT platelet kits and the initial rollout for broad use of the INTERCEPT Blood Systems for platelets in France. Finally, we expect to report that we had \$60.7 million of cash, cash equivalents and short-term investments as of December 31, 2017.

The financial results set forth above are preliminary, unaudited and subject to completion. These preliminary results have been prepared by, and are the responsibility of, our management. Our independent registered public accounting firm has not audited or performed any procedures with respect to these preliminary results and does not express an opinion or any other form of assurance with respect thereto. While we have not identified any unusual or unique events or trends that occurred during the period that might materially affect the preliminary estimates, our complete consolidated financial statements and notes thereto as of and for the year ended December 31, 2017 will not be available until after this offering is completed, and these preliminary results may differ from the results that will be reflected in such financial statements. Our financial closing procedures for the three months and year ended December 31, 2017 are not yet complete and, as a result, our final results upon completion of our closing procedures may vary from the preliminary estimates, and any such differences may be material. Our total product revenue and cash, cash equivalents and short-term investments information presented above should not be viewed as a substitute for full financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America, and undue reliance should not be placed on these preliminary results.

S-2

Table of Contents

This information should be read in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements and the related notes and Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations for prior periods incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

Company Information

We were incorporated in California in 1991 and reincorporated in Delaware in 1996. Our corporate address is 2550 Stanwell Drive, Concord, California 94520, and our telephone number is (925) 288-6000. Our website address is www.cerus.com. Information found on, or accessible through, our website is not a part of, and is not incorporated into, this prospectus supplement, and you should not consider it part of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. Our website address is included in this document as an inactive textual reference only.

Table of Contents

The Offering

Common stock offered by us	shares
Common stock to be outstanding immediately after this offering	shares, or shares if the underwriter exercises its option to purchase additional shares in full.
Option to purchase additional shares	We have granted the underwriter an option for a period of 30 days to purchase additional shares of our common stock with an aggregate offering price of up to \$7.5 million.
Use of proceeds	We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for continued development activities related to the INTERCEPT Blood System, to fund our commercialization efforts for the INTERCEPT Blood System in the United States and elsewhere, and for other general corporate purposes, including regulatory activity, selling, general and administrative expenses and working capital. See Use of Proceeds on page S-11 of this prospectus supplement.
Risk factors	Investing in our common stock involves significant risks. See Risk Factors beginning on page S-6 of this prospectus supplement and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which is incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

Nasdaq Global Market symbol CERS
 The number of shares of our common stock to be outstanding immediately after this offering as shown above is based on 112,214,393 shares outstanding as of September 30, 2017, and excludes, as of that date:

17,379,309 shares of common stock issuable upon the exercise of outstanding stock options with a weighted-average exercise price of \$4.29 per share;

1,286,381 shares of common stock issuable upon the vesting of restricted stock units; and

up to an aggregate of 8,848,455 shares of common stock remaining available for future issuance under our Amended and Restated 2008 Equity Incentive Plan and our 1996 Employee Stock Purchase Plan.

The number of shares of our common stock to be outstanding immediately after this offering as shown above does not include the up to \$42.6 million of shares of our common stock that remained available for sale at September 30, 2017, under our Controlled Equity OfferingSM Sales Agreement, as amended, or the Sales Agreement, that we previously entered into with Cantor Fitzgerald & Co. Between September 30, 2017, and the date of this prospectus supplement, we sold 3.3 million shares of common stock for gross proceeds of \$11.2 million pursuant to the Sales Agreement. In addition, in August 2017, we entered into Amendment No. 3 to the Sales Agreement. In connection with Amendment No. 3, we filed a new shelf registration statement on Form S-3, which was declared effective by the SEC on January 8, 2018, and which we refer to as the New Registration Statement. Amendment No. 3 became effective upon the effectiveness of the New Registration Statement. As a result of Amendment No. 3, the Sales Agreement provides for the issuance and sale of shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$70.0 million following the effectiveness of the

Table of Contents

New Registration Statement, which amount includes any unsold shares of common stock previously available for sale under the Sales Agreement. As of the date of this prospectus supplement, \$69.96 million of shares of our common stock remain available for sale under the Sales Agreement, as amended to date.

Except as otherwise indicated, all information in this prospectus supplement assumes no exercise of outstanding options, no vesting or settlement of restricted stock units and no exercise by the underwriter of its option to purchase additional shares.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

*An investment in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. Before deciding whether to invest in our common stock, you should consider carefully the risks described below and discussed under the section captioned **Risk Factors** contained in our **Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q** for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus in its entirety, together with the other information in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the information and documents incorporated by reference and any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. If any of these risks actually occurs, our business, financial condition, results of operations or cash flows could be seriously harmed. This could cause the trading price of our common stock to decline, resulting in a loss of all or part of your investment.*

Risks Related to This Offering

Our stock price is volatile and your investment may suffer a decline in value.

The market price for our common stock has varied between a high of \$4.70 on April 26, 2017, and a low of \$1.93 on May 26, 2017, in the twelve-month period ended December 31, 2017. As a result of fluctuations in the price of our common stock, you may be unable to sell your shares at or above the price you paid for them. The market price of our common stock is likely to continue to be volatile and subject to significant price and volume fluctuations in response to market, industry and other factors, including the risk factors described under the section captioned **Risk Factors** contained in our **Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q** for the quarter ended September 30, 2017. The market price of our common stock may also be dependent upon the valuations and recommendations of the analysts who cover our business. If the results of our business do not meet these analysts' forecasts, the expectations of investors or the financial guidance we provide to investors in any period, the market price of our common stock could decline.

In addition, the stock markets in general, and the markets for biotechnology stocks in particular, have experienced significant volatility that has often been unrelated to the operating performance of particular companies. The financial markets continue to face significant uncertainty, resulting in a decline in investor confidence and concerns about the proper functioning of the securities markets, which decline in general investor confidence resulted in depressed stock prices for many companies notwithstanding the lack of a fundamental change in their underlying business models or prospects. These broad market fluctuations may adversely affect the trading price of our common stock and, consequently, adversely affect the price at which you could sell the shares that you purchase in this offering. In the past, following periods of volatility in the market or significant price declines, securities class-action litigation has often been instituted against companies. Such litigation, if instituted against us, could result in substantial costs and diversion of management's attention and resources, which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations and growth prospects.

We currently have a limited trading volume, which results in higher price volatility for, and reduced liquidity of, our common stock.

Our shares of common stock are currently quoted on The Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol **CERS**. The market for our common stock has been limited due to low trading volume and the small number of brokerage firms acting as market makers. Active trading markets generally result in lower price volatility and more efficient execution of buy and sell orders. The absence of an active trading market increases price volatility and reduces the liquidity of our common stock. As long as this condition continues, the sale of a significant number of shares of common stock at any particular time could be difficult to achieve at the market prices prevailing immediately before such shares are offered, which may limit our ability to effectively raise money. In addition, due to the limitations of our market and the

volatility in the market price of our stock, investors in this offering may face difficulties in selling shares at attractive prices when they want to sell. As a result of this lack of trading activity, the quoted price for our common stock is not necessarily a reliable indicator of its fair market value.

S-6

Table of Contents

If you purchase the common stock sold in this offering, you will experience immediate and substantial dilution in your investment. You will experience further dilution if we issue additional equity securities in future fundraising transactions.

Since the price per share of our common stock being offered is substantially higher than the net tangible book value per share of our common stock, you will suffer substantial dilution with respect to the net tangible book value of common stock you purchase in this offering. Based on the public offering price of \$ per share and our net tangible book value as of September 30, 2017, if you purchase shares of common stock in this offering, you will suffer immediate and substantial dilution of \$ per share with respect to the net tangible book value of common stock. Please see Dilution below for a more detailed discussion of the dilution you will incur if you purchase common stock in this offering.

We expect that significant additional capital may be needed in the future to continue our planned operations. 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 raise capital, we may sell substantial amounts of common stock or securities convertible into or exchangeable or exercisable for common stock. If we issue additional common stock, or securities convertible into or exchangeable or exercisable for common stock, including pursuant to the Sales Agreement, our stockholders, including investors who purchase shares of common stock in this offering, could experience additional dilution, and any such issuances may result in downward pressure on the price of our common stock. New investors could also gain rights, preferences and privileges senior to those of holders of our common stock. In addition, as described in the section captioned Underwriting, the restrictions in the company lock-up agreement do not apply to, among other things, any sales or issuances of common stock under the Sales Agreement or any issuances of common stock upon the exercise, vesting or settlement of equity awards.

Management will have broad discretion as to the use of the proceeds from this offering, and we may not use the proceeds effectively.

The amount and timing of our use of the net proceeds from this offering will depend on a number of factors, such as the timing and progress of our commercialization efforts in the United States and in other jurisdictions, research and development and regulatory efforts, technological advances and the competitive environment for our products. Our management will have broad discretion in the application of the net proceeds from this offering and could spend the proceeds in ways that do not improve our results of operations or enhance the value of our common stock. Our failure to apply these funds effectively could have a material adverse effect on our business, impair or delay our ability to commercialize our products or to develop our product candidates, and cause the price of our common stock to decline.

Because we do not anticipate paying any cash dividends on our common stock in the foreseeable future, capital appreciation, if any, will be your sole source of gain.

We have never declared or paid cash dividends on our common stock and do not intend to pay cash dividends on our common stock in the foreseeable future. We currently intend to retain all of our future earnings, if any, to finance the growth and development of our business. Additionally, any cash dividends declared or paid would require prior written consent under the terms of our loan and security agreement with Oxford Finance LLC. As a result, capital appreciation, if any, of our common stock will be your sole source of gain for the foreseeable future.

The recently passed comprehensive tax reform bill could adversely affect our business and financial condition.

On December 22, 2017, President Trump signed into law new tax legislation, or the Tax Act, which significantly changes the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. The Tax Act, among other things, contains significant

changes to corporate taxation, including reduction of the corporate tax rate from a top

S-7

Table of Contents

marginal rate of 35% to a flat rate of 21%, limitation of the tax deduction for interest expense to 30% of adjusted earnings (except for certain small businesses), limitation of the deduction for net operating losses to 80% of current year taxable income and elimination of net operating loss carrybacks, changes in the treatment of offshore earnings regardless of whether they are repatriated, mandatory capitalization of research and development expenses, immediate deductions for certain new investments instead of deductions for depreciation expense over time, further deduction limits on executive compensation and modifying, repealing and creating many other business deductions and credits. Our federal net operating loss carryovers generated in 2018 and thereafter will be carried forward indefinitely pursuant to the Tax Act. We continue to examine the impact this tax reform legislation may have on our business. Notwithstanding the reduction in the corporate income tax rate, the overall impact of the Tax Act is uncertain and our business and financial condition could be adversely affected. The impact of this tax reform on holders of our common stock is also uncertain and could be adverse. This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus do not discuss any such tax legislation or the manner in which it might affect us or purchasers of our common stock. We urge our stockholders, including purchasers of common stock in this offering, to consult with their legal and tax advisors with respect to such legislation and the potential tax consequences of investing in our common stock.

Table of Contents

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents we have filed with the SEC that are 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 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 that 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. These forward-looking statements may include, but are not limited to, statements about:

future sales of and our ability to effectively commercialize and achieve market acceptance of the INTERCEPT Blood System, including our ability to comply with applicable U.S. and foreign laws, regulations and regulatory requirements;

our ability to manage the growth of our business and attendant cost increases, including in connection with the commercialization of the INTERCEPT Blood System in the United States, as well as our ability to manage the risks attendant to our international operations;

the timing or likelihood of regulatory submissions and approvals and other regulatory actions or interactions, including our anticipated CE mark submission for the red blood cell system in the second half of 2018;

our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals of the INTERCEPT Blood System;

our ability to obtain adequate clinical and commercial supplies of the INTERCEPT Blood System from our sole source suppliers for a particular product or component they manufacture;

the initiation, scope, rate of progress, results and timing of our ongoing and proposed preclinical studies and clinical trials of the INTERCEPT Blood System;

the successful completion of our research, development and clinical programs and our ability to manage cost increases associated with preclinical and clinical development of the INTERCEPT Blood System;

the amount and availability of funding we may receive under our agreement with the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority;

our ability to transition distribution of the INTERCEPT Blood System from third parties to a direct sales model in certain international markets;

the ability of our products to inactivate the emerging viruses and other pathogens that we may target in the future;

our ability to protect our intellectual property and operate our business without infringing upon the intellectual property rights of others;

the anticipated use of proceeds from this offering; and

our estimates regarding the sufficiency of our cash resources and our need for additional funding.

S-9

Table of Contents

In some cases, you can identify forward-looking statements by terms such as anticipate, will, believe, estimate, expect, plan, may, should, could, would, project, predict, potential, and similar expressions intended to identify forward-looking statements. These statements reflect our current views with respect to future events, are based on assumptions and are subject to risks and uncertainties. Given these uncertainties, you should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We discuss many of these risks in greater detail under the heading Risk Factors beginning on page S-6 of this prospectus supplement and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. See Where You Can Find More Information. Also, these forward-looking statements represent our estimates and assumptions only as of the date of the document containing the applicable statement.

You should read this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents we have filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference herein and any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering completely and with the understanding that our 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.

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.

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

We estimate that the net proceeds from the sale of the shares of common stock that we are offering will be approximately \$ million, or approximately \$ million if the underwriter exercises in full its option to purchase up to \$ of additional shares of common stock, after deducting the underwriting discounts and commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us.

We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for continued development activities related to the INTERCEPT Blood System, to fund our commercialization efforts for the INTERCEPT Blood System in the United States and elsewhere, and for other general corporate purposes, including regulatory activity, selling, general and administrative expenses and working capital.

The amounts and timing of our use of the net proceeds from this offering will depend on a number of factors, such as the timing and progress of our commercialization efforts in the United States and in other jurisdictions, research and development and regulatory efforts, technological advances and the competitive environment for our products. As of the date of this prospectus supplement, we cannot specify with certainty all of the particular uses for the net proceeds to us from this offering. Accordingly, our management will have broad discretion in the 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 or other investment-grade securities.

DIVIDEND POLICY

We have never declared or paid dividends on our common stock and do not intend to pay cash dividends on our common stock in the foreseeable future. Additionally, any cash dividends declared or paid would require prior written consent under the terms of our loan and security agreement with Oxford Finance LLC.

Table of Contents**DILUTION**

Our net tangible book value as of September 30, 2017 was approximately \$35.3 million, or \$0.31 per share. Net tangible book value per share is determined by dividing our total tangible assets, less total liabilities, by the number of shares of our common stock outstanding as of September 30, 2017. Dilution with respect to net tangible book value per share represents the difference between the amount per share paid by purchasers of shares of common stock in this offering and the net tangible book value per share of our common stock immediately after this offering.

After giving effect to the sale of _____ shares of our common stock in this offering at the public offering price of \$ _____ per share and after deducting the underwriting discounts and commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us, our as adjusted net tangible book value as of September 30, 2017 would have been approximately \$ _____ million, or \$ _____ per share. This represents an immediate increase in net tangible book value of \$ _____ per share to existing stockholders and immediate dilution of \$ _____ per share to investors purchasing our common stock in this offering at the public offering price. The following table illustrates this dilution on a per share basis:

Public offering price per share	\$
Net tangible book value per share of as September 30, 2017	\$ 0.31
Increase in net tangible book value per share attributable to investors purchasing our common stock in this offering	

As adjusted net tangible book value per share after this offering

Dilution per share to investors purchasing our common stock in this offering	\$
--	----

If the underwriter exercises in full its option to purchase up to _____ additional shares of common stock, the as adjusted net tangible book value after this offering would be \$ _____ per share, representing an increase in net tangible book value of \$ _____ per share to existing stockholders and immediate dilution of \$ _____ per share to investors purchasing our common stock in this offering at the public offering price.

The above discussion and table are based on 112,214,393 shares outstanding as of September 30, 2017, and exclude, as of that date:

17,379,309 shares of common stock issuable upon the exercise of outstanding stock options with a weighted-average exercise price of \$4.29 per share;

1,286,381 shares of common stock issuable upon the vesting of restricted stock units; and

up to an aggregate of 8,848,455 shares of common stock remaining available for future issuance under our Amended and Restated 2008 Equity Incentive Plan and our 1996 Employee Stock Purchase Plan.

The number of shares of our common stock to be outstanding immediately after this offering as shown above does not include the up to \$42.6 million of shares of our common stock that remained available for sale at September 30, 2017 under the Sales Agreement. Between September 30, 2017, and the date of this prospectus supplement, we sold

3.3 million shares of common stock for gross proceeds of \$11.2 million pursuant to the Sales Agreement. In connection with the effectiveness of Amendment No. 3 to the Sales Agreement and the New Registration Statement, as of the date of this prospectus supplement, \$69.96 million of shares of our common stock remain available for sale under the Sales Agreement.

S-12

Table of Contents

To the extent that outstanding stock options are exercised, restricted stock units vest or other shares issued, including sales of our common stock pursuant to the Sales Agreement, 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 additional capital is raised through the sale of equity or convertible debt securities, the issuance of these securities could result in further dilution to our stockholders. In addition, as described in the section captioned

Underwriting, the restrictions in the company lock-up agreement do not apply to, among other things, any sales or issuances of common stock under the Sales Agreement or any issuances of common stock upon the exercise, vesting or settlement of equity awards.

Table of Contents

CERTAIN MATERIAL U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSIDERATIONS FOR NON-U.S. HOLDERS

The following is a summary of certain material U.S. federal income tax considerations relating to the purchase, ownership and disposition of our common stock applicable to non-U.S. holders as defined below. This discussion is not a complete analysis of all of the potential U.S. federal income tax consequences relating thereto, nor does it address any tax consequences arising under any state, local or foreign tax laws, or under the gift, estate or any other U.S. federal tax laws. This summary is based upon the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or the Code, Treasury regulations promulgated thereunder, administrative rulings and judicial decisions, all as of the date hereof. These authorities may be changed, possibly retroactively, so as to result in U.S. federal income tax consequences different from those set forth below. We have not sought any ruling from the Internal Revenue Service, or the IRS, with respect to the statements made and the conclusions reached in the following summary, and there can be no assurance that the IRS will agree with such statements and conclusions. The term non-U.S. holder means a beneficial owner of our common stock that, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, is not any entity taxable as a partnership (or the investors in any such entity), or any of the following:

an individual who is a citizen or resident of the U.S.;

a corporation or other entity taxable as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes created or organized in the U.S. or under the laws of the U.S., any state thereof, or the District of Columbia or otherwise treated as such for U.S. federal income tax purposes;

an estate, the income of which is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source; or

a trust that (1) is subject to the primary supervision of a U.S. court and the control of one or more U.S. persons or (2) has a valid election in effect under applicable Treasury regulations to be treated as a U.S. person.

This summary is limited to non-U.S. holders who purchase shares of our common stock issued pursuant to this offering and who hold our common stock as a capital asset within the meaning of Section 1221 of the Code (generally, property held for investment). In addition, this discussion does not address tax considerations applicable to an investor's particular circumstances or to investors that may be subject to special tax rules, including, without limitation:

banks, insurance companies, or other financial institutions;

persons subject to the alternative minimum tax or the Medicare net investment income tax;

tax-exempt organizations;

dealers in securities or currencies;

traders in securities that elect to use a mark-to-market method of accounting for their securities holdings;

controlled foreign corporations, passive foreign investment companies or corporations that accumulate earnings to avoid U.S. federal income tax;

persons that are partnerships or other pass-through entities or partners or members of such entities or entities that are disregarded for tax purposes;

certain former citizens or long-term residents of the U.S.; or

S-14

Table of Contents

persons who hold our common stock as part of a hedge, straddle, constructive sale, or conversion transaction.

YOU ARE URGED TO CONSULT YOUR TAX ADVISOR WITH RESPECT TO THE APPLICATION OF THE U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX LAWS TO YOUR PARTICULAR SITUATION, AS WELL AS ANY TAX CONSEQUENCES OF THE PURCHASE, OWNERSHIP AND DISPOSITION OF OUR COMMON STOCK ARISING UNDER THE FEDERAL ESTATE OR GIFT TAX RULES OR UNDER THE LAWS OF ANY STATE, LOCAL, FOREIGN OR OTHER TAXING JURISDICTION OR UNDER ANY APPLICABLE TAX TREATY.

Distributions on Common Stock

If we make cash or other property distributions on our common stock, such distributions will constitute dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes to the extent paid from our current or accumulated earnings and profits, as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles. Distributions in excess of our earnings and profits will constitute a return of capital that will first be applied against and reduce the non-U.S. holder's adjusted tax basis in our common stock, but not below zero. Any remaining excess will be treated as gain realized on the sale or other disposition of the common stock and will be treated as described under "Gain on Disposition of Common Stock" below.

Dividends paid to a non-U.S. holder that are not effectively connected with the non-U.S. holder's conduct of a trade or business in the U.S. will generally be subject to withholding of U.S. federal income tax at the rate of 30%, or if a tax treaty applies, a lower rate specified by the treaty. Non-U.S. holders should consult their tax advisors regarding their entitlement to benefits under a relevant income tax treaty.

Dividends that are effectively connected with a non-U.S. holder's conduct of a trade or business in the U.S. and, if an income tax treaty applies, are attributable to a permanent establishment in the U.S., are generally exempt from withholding and will be taxed on a net income basis at the same graduated U.S. federal income tax rates applicable to a U.S. person, as defined under the Code. In such cases, we will not have to withhold U.S. federal income tax if the non-U.S. holder complies with applicable certification requirements. In addition, if the non-U.S. holder is a corporation, a branch profits tax equal to 30% (or lower applicable treaty rate) may be imposed on a portion of its effectively connected earnings and profits for the taxable year. Non-U.S. holders should consult their tax advisors regarding any applicable tax treaties that may provide for different rules.

To claim the benefit of a tax treaty or an exemption from withholding because the dividends are effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business in the U.S., a non-U.S. holder must either (a) provide a properly executed IRS Form W-8BEN, IRS Form W-8BEN-E, or IRS Form W-8ECI (as applicable) before the payment of dividends or (b) if our common stock is held through certain foreign intermediaries, satisfy the relevant certification requirements of applicable U.S. Treasury regulations. These forms may need to be periodically updated. Non-U.S. holders may obtain a refund of any excess amounts withheld by timely filing an appropriate claim for refund with the IRS.

For additional withholding rules that may apply to dividends paid to certain foreign entities, see the discussion below regarding the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act.

Gain on Disposition of Common Stock

Subject to the discussions below regarding backup withholding and the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, a non-U.S. holder generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income tax or any withholding thereof with respect to gain recognized on a sale or other disposition of our common stock unless one of the following applies:

the gain is effectively connected with the non-U.S. holder's conduct of a trade or business in the U.S. and, if an income tax treaty applies, is attributable to a permanent establishment maintained by the

S-15

Table of Contents

non-U.S. holder in the U.S.; in these cases, the non-U.S. holder will generally be taxed on its net gain derived from the disposition at the same graduated U.S. federal income tax rates applicable to a U.S. person and, if the non-U.S. holder is a foreign corporation, the branch profits tax described above may also apply;

the non-U.S. holder is a non-resident individual who is present in the U.S. for 183 days or more in the taxable year of the disposition and meets certain other requirements; in this case, the non-U.S. holder will be subject to U.S. federal income tax at a rate of 30% (or a reduced rate under an applicable treaty) on the amount by which capital gains (including gain recognized on a sale or other disposition of our common stock) allocable to U.S. sources exceed capital losses allocable to U.S. sources (provided that the non-U.S. holder has timely filed U.S. income tax returns with respect to such losses); or

our common stock constitutes a United States real property interest by reason of our status as a United States real property holding corporation, or USRPHC, for U.S. federal income tax purposes at any time during the shorter of the 5-year period ending on the date you dispose of our common stock or the period you held our common stock.

The determination of whether we are a USRPHC depends on the fair market value of our U.S. real property interests relative to the fair market value of our other business assets. We believe that we currently are not and do not anticipate becoming a USRPHC. However, there can be no assurance that we will not become a USRPHC in the future.

Information Reporting and Backup Withholding

We must report annually to the IRS the amount of dividends or other distributions we pay to you on your shares of common stock and the amount of tax we withhold on these distributions regardless of whether withholding is required. The IRS may make copies of the information returns reporting those distributions and amounts withheld available to the tax authorities in the country in which you reside pursuant to the provisions of an applicable income tax treaty or exchange of information treaty. Backup withholding tax may also apply to payments made to a non-U.S. holder on or with respect to our common stock, unless the non-U.S. holder certifies as to its status as a non-U.S. holder under penalties of perjury or otherwise establishes an exemption, and certain other conditions are satisfied. Notwithstanding the foregoing, backup withholding may apply if either we or our paying agent has actual knowledge, or reason to know, that the holder is a U.S. person that is not an exempt recipient.

Information reporting and backup withholding generally are not required with respect to the amount of any proceeds from the sale of your shares of common stock outside the U.S. through a foreign office of a foreign broker that does not have certain specified connections to the U.S. However, if you sell your shares of common stock through a U.S. broker or the U.S. office of a foreign broker, the broker will be required to report to the IRS the amount of proceeds paid to you and also perform backup withholding on that amount unless you provide appropriate certification to the broker of your status as a non-U.S. holder or you otherwise establish an exemption. Information reporting will also apply if you sell your shares of common stock through a foreign broker deriving more than a specified percentage of its income from U.S. sources or having certain other connections to the U.S., unless such broker has documenting evidence in its records that you are a non-U.S. holder and certain other conditions are met or you otherwise establish an exemption.

Backup withholding is not an additional tax. Any amounts withheld under the backup withholding rules from a payment to a non-U.S. holder will be allowed as a refund or a credit against such non-U.S. holder's U.S. federal income tax liability, if any, provided that the required information is timely furnished to the IRS. Non-U.S. holders should consult their own tax advisors regarding the filing of a U.S. tax return for claiming a refund of such backup

withholding.

S-16

Table of Contents

Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act

Pursuant to Sections 1471 to 1474 of the Code and the Treasury regulations promulgated thereunder (FATCA), dividends paid in respect of our common stock, and, after December 31, 2018, gross proceeds from the sale or other disposition of our common stock held by or through certain foreign financial institutions (as specially defined for purposes of these rules, including investment funds) will be subject to withholding at a rate of 30%, unless (1) such institution enters into an agreement with the Treasury to report, on an annual basis, information with respect to interests in, and accounts maintained by, the institution to the extent such interests or accounts are held by certain U.S. persons and by certain non-U.S. entities that are wholly or partially owned by U.S. persons and to withhold on certain payments or (2) such institution otherwise qualifies for an exemption from these rules. An intergovernmental agreement between the U.S. and an applicable foreign country, or future Treasury regulations or other guidance, may modify these requirements. Accordingly, the entity through which our common stock is held will affect the determination of whether such withholding is required. Similarly, dividends in respect of our common stock, and, after December 31, 2018 gross proceeds from the sale or other disposition of our common stock held by an investor that is a non-financial foreign entity (as specially defined for purposes of these rules) that does not qualify under certain exemptions will be subject to withholding at a rate of 30%, unless such entity either (i) certifies to us that such entity does not have any substantial United States owners or (ii) provides certain information regarding the entity's substantial United States owners, which we will in turn provide to the IRS. We will not pay any additional amounts to non-U.S. holders in respect of any amounts withheld. Non-U.S. holders are encouraged to consult their tax advisors regarding the possible implications of the legislation on their investment in our common stock.

THE SUMMARY OF MATERIAL U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES ABOVE IS INCLUDED FOR GENERAL INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY. POTENTIAL PURCHASERS OF OUR COMMON STOCK ARE URGED TO CONSULT THEIR TAX ADVISORS TO DETERMINE THE U.S. FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL AND FOREIGN TAX CONSIDERATIONS OF PURCHASING, OWNING AND DISPOSING OF OUR COMMON STOCK.

Table of Contents**UNDERWRITING**

Subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the underwriting agreement between us and the underwriter named below, we have agreed to sell to the underwriter, and the underwriter has agreed to purchase from us, the shares of common stock shown opposite its name below:

Underwriter	Number of Shares
BTIG, LLC	

Commission and Expenses

The underwriter has agreed to purchase the shares of common stock from us at a price of \$ per share, which will result in approximately \$ of proceeds to us before expenses. The underwriter proposes to offer the shares of common stock from time to time for sale in one or more transactions on Nasdaq, in the over-the-counter market, through negotiated transactions or otherwise, at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices related to prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices, subject to receipt and acceptance by it and subject to its right to reject any order in whole or in part. The difference between the price at which the underwriter purchases shares and the price at which the underwriter resells such shares may be deemed underwriting compensation. The underwriter may effect such transactions by selling shares of common stock to or through dealers, and as such dealers may receive compensation in the form of discounts, concessions or commission from the underwriter and/or purchases of shares of common stock for whom they may act as agents or to who they may sell as principal.

We estimate expenses payable by us in connection with this offering will be approximately \$0.3 million.

Listing

Our common stock is listed on The Nasdaq Global Market under the trading symbol CERUS .

No Sales of Similar Securities

We, our officers and our directors have agreed, subject to certain specified exceptions, not to directly or indirectly, for a period of 90 days after the date of the underwriting agreement:

sell, offer, contract or grant any option to sell (including any short sale), pledge, transfer, establish an open put equivalent position within the meaning of Rule 16a-1(h) under the Exchange Act, or

otherwise dispose of any shares of common stock, options or warrants to acquire shares of common stock, or securities exchangeable or exercisable for or convertible into shares of common stock currently or hereafter owned either of record or beneficially, or

publicly announce an intention to do any of the foregoing for a period of 90 days after the date of this prospectus supplement without the prior written consent of BTIG, LLC.

In addition, we and each such person agrees that, without the prior written consent of BTIG, LLC, we or such other person will not, during the restricted period, make any demand for, or exercise any right with respect to, the registration of any shares of common stock or any security convertible into or exercisable or exchangeable for common stock.

The restrictions in the immediately preceding paragraph do not apply in certain circumstances, including, among others:

the sale of common stock in this offering,

S-18

Table of Contents

in connection with employee benefit plans, equity compensation plans or other compensation plans as in existence on the date of this prospectus and as described in the prospectus,

in connection with currently outstanding options, warrants or rights,

in connection with the rights agreement dated as of November 3, 1999, as amended, between us and Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., including the issuance of securities upon exercise of or in exchange for rights to purchase Series C junior participating preferred stock pursuant to the rights agreement,

the consummation by us of a strategic partnership, joint venture, collaboration or acquisition or license of any business products or technology,

the filing by us of any registration statement on Form S-8 in respect of any equity compensation plans or arrangements maintained by us, and

the filing by us of any registration statement that we may be required to file pursuant to the rights agreement or under applicable law with respect to the rights under the rights agreement and the securities issuable upon exercise or exchange of the rights under the rights agreement.

BTIG, LLC may, in its sole discretion and at any time or from time to time before the termination of the 90-day period, release all or any portion of the securities subject to lock-up agreements. There are no existing agreements between the underwriter and any of our shareholders who will execute a lock-up agreement, providing consent to the sale of shares prior to the expiration of the lock-up period.

Market Making, Stabilization and Other Transactions

The underwriter may make a market in the common stock as permitted by applicable laws and regulations. However, the underwriter is not obligated to do so, and the underwriter may discontinue any market-making activities at any time without notice in its sole discretion. Accordingly, no assurance can be given as to the liquidity of the trading market for the common stock, that you will be able to sell any of the common stock held by you at a particular time or that the prices that you receive when you sell will be favorable.

The underwriter has advised us that it, pursuant to Regulation M under the Exchange Act, and certain persons participating in this offering, may engage in short sale transactions, stabilizing transactions, syndicate covering transactions or the imposition of penalty bids in connection with this offering. These activities may have the effect of stabilizing or maintaining the market price of our common stock at a level above that which might otherwise prevail in the open market. Establishing short sales positions may involve either covered short sales or naked short sales.

Covered short sales are sales made in an amount not greater than the underwriter's option to purchase additional shares of our common stock in this offering. The underwriter may close out any covered short position by either exercising its option to purchase additional shares of our common stock or purchasing shares of our common stock in the open market. In determining the source of shares to close out the covered short position, the underwriter will consider, among other things, the price of shares of common stock available for purchase in the open market as compared to the price at which it may purchase shares through the option to purchase additional shares.

Naked short sales are sales in excess of the option to purchase additional shares of our common stock. The underwriter must close out any naked short position by purchasing shares in the open market. A naked short position is more likely to be created if the underwriter is concerned that there may be downward pressure on the price of the shares of our common stock in the open market after pricing that could adversely affect investors who purchase in this offering.

S-19

Table of Contents

A stabilizing bid is a bid for the purchase of shares of common stock on behalf of the underwriter for the purpose of fixing or maintaining the price of the common stock. A syndicate covering transaction is the bid for or the purchase of shares of common stock on behalf of the underwriter to reduce a short position incurred by the underwriter in connection with this offering. Similar to other purchase transactions, the underwriter's purchases to cover the syndicate short sales may have the effect of raising or maintaining the market price of our common stock or preventing or retarding a decline in the market price of our common stock. As a result, the price of our common stock may be higher than the price that might otherwise exist in the open market. A penalty bid is an arrangement permitting the underwriter to reclaim the selling concession otherwise accruing to a syndicate member in connection with this offering if the common stock originally sold by such syndicate member are purchased in a syndicate covering transaction and therefore have not been effectively placed by such syndicate member.

Neither we, nor the underwriter makes any representation or prediction as to the direction or magnitude of any effect that the transactions described above may have on the price of our common stock. The underwriter is not obligated to engage in these activities and, if commenced, may end any of these activities at any time.

Passive Market Making

The underwriter may also engage in passive market-making transactions in our common stock on The Nasdaq Global Market in accordance with Rule 103 of Regulation M during a period before the commencement of offers or sales of shares of our common stock in this offering and extending through the completion of distribution. A passive market maker must display its bid at a price not in excess of the highest independent bid of that security. However, if all independent bids are lowered below the passive market maker's bid, that bid must then be lowered when specified purchase limits are exceeded. Passive market making may cause the price of our common stock to be higher than the price that otherwise would exist in the open market in the absence of those transactions. The underwriter is not required to engage in passive market making and, if commenced, may end passive market making activities at any time.

Electronic Distribution

A prospectus in electronic format may be made available by e-mail or on the web sites or through online services maintained by the underwriter, selling group members (if any) or their affiliates. The underwriter may agree with us to allocate a specific number of shares of common stock for sale to online brokerage account holders. Any such allocation for online distributions will be made by the underwriter on the same basis as other allocations. Other than the prospectus in electronic format, the information on the underwriter's web site and any information contained in any other web site maintained by any of the underwriter is not part of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus, has not been approved and/or endorsed by us or the underwriter and should not be relied upon by investors.

Other Activities and Relationships

The underwriter and certain of its respective affiliates are full service financial institutions engaged in a wide range of activities for their own accounts and the accounts of customers, which may include, among other things, corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, merchant banking, equity and fixed income sales, trading and research, derivatives, foreign exchange, futures, asset management, custody, clearance and securities lending. The underwriter and certain of its affiliates have, from time to time, performed, and may in the future perform, various investment banking and financial advisory services for us and our affiliates, for which they received or will receive customary fees and expenses.

In addition, in the ordinary course of their various business activities, the underwriter and certain of its respective affiliates may, directly or indirectly, hold long or short positions, trade and otherwise conduct such activities in or with respect to debt or equity securities and/or bank debt of, and/or derivative products. Such investment and

S-20

Table of Contents

securities activities may involve our securities and instruments. The underwriter and certain of its respective affiliates may also make investment recommendations or publish or express independent research views in respect of such securities or instruments and may at any time hold, or recommend to clients that they acquire, long or short positions in such securities and instruments.

Stamp Taxes

If you purchase shares of common stock offered in this prospectus supplement, you may be required to pay stamp taxes and other charges under the laws and practices of the country of purchase, in addition to the offering price listed on the cover page of this prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the common stock offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus will be passed upon for us by Cooley LLP, San Francisco, California. Goodwin Procter LLP, New York, New York, is counsel for the underwriter in connection with this offering.

EXPERTS

Ernst & Young LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, has audited our consolidated financial statements included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, and the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2016, as set forth in their reports, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus, prospectus supplement and elsewhere in the registration statement. Our financial statements are incorporated by reference in reliance on Ernst & Young LLP's reports, given on their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are part of the registration statement on Form S-3 we filed with the SEC under the Securities Act and do not contain all the information set forth or incorporated by reference in the registration statement. Whenever a reference is made in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying 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 in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying 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>. 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.

Table of Contents

INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference information from other documents that we file with them, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference herein is considered to be part of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. Information contained in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and information that we file with the SEC in the future and incorporate by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus will automatically update and supersede this information. We incorporate by reference the documents listed below and any future filings (other than Current Reports on Form 8-K furnished under Item 2.02 or Item 7.01 and exhibits filed on such form that are related to such items) we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of the prospectus supplement and before the sale of all the securities covered by this prospectus supplement (SEC File No. 000-21937):

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, which was filed on March 8, 2017, as amended by Amendment No. 1 to Form 10-K, filed with the Commission on May 31, 2017 (as amended, the 2016 Form 10-K);

the information specifically incorporated by reference into the 2016 Form 10-K from our definitive proxy statement relating to our 2017 annual meeting of stockholders, which was filed on April 28, 2017;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2017, which was filed on May 4, 2017;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2017, which was filed on August 4, 2017;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which was filed on November 3, 2017;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K, which were filed on April 17, 2017, May 24, 2017, June 8, 2017, August 2, 2017 and January 5, 2018;

the description of our common stock in our registration statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on January 8, 1997, including all amendments and reports filed for the purpose of updating such description; and

the description of our preferred share purchase rights in our registration statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on October 30, 2009, including all amendments and reports filed for the purpose of updating such description.

You can request a copy of these filings, at no cost, by writing or telephoning us at the following address or telephone number:

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

Cerus Corporation

2550 Stanwell Drive

Concord, CA 94520

(925) 288-6000

Attention: Investor Relations

S-23

Table of Contents

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 may also 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 CERS. On December 27, 2017, the last reported sale price of our common stock was \$3.41 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 prospectuses 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.

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 January 8, 2018.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u>	i
<u>PROSPECTUS SUMMARY</u>	1
<u>RISK FACTORS</u>	5
<u>FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u>	6
<u>FINANCIAL RATIOS</u>	8
<u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u>	9
<u>DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK</u>	10
<u>DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES</u>	16
<u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS</u>	23
<u>LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES</u>	25
<u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u>	29
<u>LEGAL MATTERS</u>	31
<u>EXPERTS</u>	31
<u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u>	31
<u>INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE</u>	32

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 prospectuses 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 the applicable prospectus supplement, along with the information contained in any free writing prospectuses 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 and 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, the 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.

Table of Contents

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**.

Table of Contents

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.

Cerus Corporation

Overview

We are a biomedical products company focused on developing and commercializing the INTERCEPT Blood System to enhance blood safety. The INTERCEPT Blood System, which is based on our proprietary technology for controlling biological replication, is designed to reduce blood-borne pathogens in donated blood components intended for transfusion.

Our INTERCEPT Blood System is for use with three blood components: plasma, platelets, and red blood cells. The INTERCEPT Blood System for platelets, or platelet system, and the INTERCEPT Blood System for plasma, or plasma system, have received a broad range of regulatory approvals, including but not limited to U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, approval in the U.S., and Class III CE marks in the European Union and other jurisdictions that recognize CE mark approval, and are being marketed and sold in a number of countries around the world, including the U.S.; certain countries in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Middle East, and Latin America and selected countries in other regions of the world. We sell both the platelet and plasma systems using our direct sales force and through distributors. The INTERCEPT Blood System for red blood cells, or the red blood cell system, is currently in clinical development. If we are unable to gain widespread commercial adoption in markets where our blood safety products are approved for commercialization, including in the U.S., we will have difficulties achieving profitability.

In order to successfully commercialize all of our products and product candidates, we will be required to conduct significant research, development, preclinical and clinical evaluation, commercialization and regulatory compliance activities for our products and product candidates, which, together with anticipated increased selling, general and administrative expenses, are expected to result in substantial losses. Accordingly, we may never achieve a profitable level of operations in the future.

Company Information

We were incorporated in California in 1991 and reincorporated in Delaware in 1996. Our corporate address is 2550 Stanwell Drive, Concord, California 94520, and our telephone number is (925) 288-6000. Our website address is www.cerus.com. Information found on, or accessible through, our website is not a part of, and is not incorporated into, this prospectus, and you should not consider it part of this prospectus or part of any prospectus supplement. Our website address is included in this document as an inactive textual reference only.

Unless the context indicates otherwise, as used in this prospectus, the terms Cerus, Cerus Corporation, we, us and refer to Cerus Corporation, a Delaware corporation, and its wholly-owned subsidiary, Cerus Europe B.V. Cerus,

INTERCEPT and INTERCEPT Blood System are U.S. registered trademarks of Cerus Corporation. All other trademarks or trade names referred to in this prospectus and any prospectus supplement are the property of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

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

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.

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.

Table of Contents

Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any outstanding shares of our 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. In the event of a liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our company, holders of the 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 or sinking fund provisions applicable to the 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 amended and restated certificate of incorporation, our board of directors has the authority to designate up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock 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. Our board of directors has previously designated 5,000 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series A Preferred Stock, all of which shares converted to common stock in July 2002, and 250,000 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock. We are not offering any of the previously designated series of preferred stock under this prospectus. If we sell any new series of preferred stock under this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement, our board of directors will determine the rights, preferences and privileges of the preferred stock being offered, as well as the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, conversion rights, voting 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 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

Table of Contents

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.

Use of Proceeds

Except as described in any applicable prospectus supplement or in any free writing prospectuses we have authorized for use in connection with a specific offering, we currently intend to use the net proceeds from this offering, if any, for working capital and general corporate purposes, including research and development expenses, selling, general and administrative expenses and manufacturing expenses. See *Use of Proceeds* on page 9 of this prospectus.

NASDAQ Global Market Listing

Our common stock is listed on The NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol *CERS*.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. Before deciding whether to invest in our securities, you should consider carefully the risks and uncertainties described under the heading **Risk Factors** contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, and discussed under the section entitled **Risk Factors** contained in our most recent annual report on Form 10-K and in our most recent quarterly report on Form 10-Q, as well as any amendments thereto reflected in subsequent filings with the SEC, which are incorporated by reference into this prospectus in their entirety, together with other information in this prospectus, the documents incorporated by reference and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize for use in connection with a specific offering. The risks described in these documents are not the only ones we face, but those that we consider to be material. There may be other unknown or unpredictable economic, business, competitive, regulatory or other factors that could have material adverse effects on our future results. Past financial performance may not be a reliable indicator of future performance, and historical trends should not be used to anticipate results or trends in future periods. If any of these risks actually occurs, our business, financial condition, results of operations or cash flow could be seriously harmed. This could cause the trading price of our securities to decline, resulting in a loss of all or part of your investment. Please also carefully read the section below entitled **Forward-Looking Statements**.

Table of Contents

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus and the documents we have filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference 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 that 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. These forward-looking statements may include, but are not limited to, statements about:

future sales of and our ability to effectively commercialize and achieve market acceptance of the INTERCEPT Blood System, including our ability to comply with applicable U.S. and foreign laws, regulations and regulatory requirements;

our ability to manage the growth of our business and attendant cost increases, including in connection with the commercialization of the INTERCEPT Blood System in the United States, as well as our ability to manage the risks attendant to our international operations;

the timing or likelihood of regulatory submissions and approvals and other regulatory actions or interactions, including our anticipated CE mark submission for the red blood cell system;

our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals of the INTERCEPT Blood System;

our ability to obtain adequate clinical and commercial supplies of the INTERCEPT Blood System from our sole source suppliers for a particular product or component they manufacture;

the initiation, scope, rate of progress, results and timing of our ongoing and proposed preclinical studies and clinical trials of the INTERCEPT Blood System;

the successful completion of our research, development and clinical programs and our ability to manage cost increases associated with preclinical and clinical development of the INTERCEPT Blood System;

the amount and availability of funding we may receive under our agreement with the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority;

our ability to transition distribution of the INTERCEPT Blood System from third parties to a direct sales model in certain international markets;

the ability of our products to inactivate the emerging viruses and other pathogens that we may target in the future;

our ability to protect our intellectual property and operate our business without infringing upon the intellectual property rights of others;

our intended use of the net proceeds from offerings of our securities under this prospectus; and

our estimates regarding the sufficiency of our cash resources and our need for additional funding.

In some cases, you can identify forward-looking statements by terms such as anticipate, will, believe, estimate, expect, plan, may, should, could, would, project, predict, potential, and similar expressions intended to identify forward-looking statements. These statements reflect our current views with respect to future events, are based on assumptions and are subject to risks and uncertainties. Given these uncertainties, you should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We discuss in greater detail, and incorporate by reference into this prospectus in their entirety, many of these risks and uncertainties 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 in our most recent annual report

Table of Contents

on Form 10-K and in our most recent quarterly report on Form 10-Q, as well as any amendments thereto reflected in subsequent filings with the SEC. Also, these forward-looking statements represent our estimates and assumptions only as of the date of the document containing the applicable statement.

You should read this prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement, together with the documents we have filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference and any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with a specific offering completely and with the understanding that our 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.

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.

Table of Contents**FINANCIAL RATIOS**

The following table sets forth our ratio of earnings to fixed charges and the ratio of our earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends to earnings for each of the years ended December 31, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012, and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017. Our earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges and combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends for each of the periods presented. Earnings are the sum of (i) loss from continuing operations before losses from equity affiliates, and (ii) fixed charges, less interest capitalized. Fixed charges are the sum of (i) interest expensed and capitalized, (ii) amortization of capitalized expenses related to indebtedness, and (iii) estimate of interest within rental expense. Preference dividends are the amount of pre-tax earnings that is required to pay the dividends on outstanding preference securities. Because of these deficiencies, the ratio information is not applicable for those periods. The extent to which earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges and combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends for those periods is shown below. Amounts shown are in thousands, except for ratios.

	Year Ended December 31,					Nine Months Ended
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	September 30, 2017
Ratio of earnings to fixed charges	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Deficiency of earnings available to cover fixed charges	\$ (57,761)	\$ (56,040)	\$ (37,273)	\$ (42,384)	\$ (14,959)	\$ (40,851)
Deficiency of earnings available to cover combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends	\$ (57,761)	\$ (56,040)	\$ (37,273)	\$ (42,384)	\$ (14,959)	\$ (40,851)

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

Except as described in any applicable prospectus supplement or in any free writing prospectuses we have authorized for use in connection with a specific offering, we currently intend to use the net proceeds from this offering, if any, for working capital and general corporate purposes, including research and development expenses, selling, general and administrative expenses and manufacturing expenses.

The amounts and timing of our use of the net proceeds from this offering 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 and commercialization efforts, technological advances and the competitive environment for our products. As of the date of this prospectus, we cannot specify with certainty all of the particular uses for the net proceeds to us from this offering. 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.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

As of the date of this prospectus, our amended and restated certificate of incorporation (as amended), or the Restated Certificate, authorizes us to issue 225,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.001 per share, and 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.001 per share. As of December 27, 2017, 115,554,634 shares of common stock were outstanding. As of the date of this prospectus, our board of directors has also designated 5,000 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series A Preferred Stock, and 250,000 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock. As of the date of this prospectus, no shares of our Series A Preferred Stock or Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock are outstanding.

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

Common Stock

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 the stockholders. Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any outstanding shares of our preferred stock, the holders of common stock are entitled to receive ratably such dividends as may be declared by the board of directors out of funds legally available therefor. In the event of a liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our company, holders of the 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 or sinking fund provisions applicable to the common stock. When we issue shares of common stock under this prospectus, the shares will be fully paid and nonassessable.

Additional shares of authorized common stock may be issued, as authorized by our board of directors from time to time, without stockholder approval, except as may be required by applicable stock exchange requirements.

Preferred Stock

Pursuant to the Restated Certificate, our board of directors has the authority, without further action by the stockholders, to issue up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock in one or more series and to fix the designations, powers, preferences, privileges and relative participating, optional or special rights and the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, conversion rights, voting rights, terms of redemption and liquidation preferences, any or all of which may be greater than the rights of the common stock. The board of directors, without stockholder approval, can issue preferred stock with voting, conversion or other rights that could adversely affect the voting power and other rights of the holders of common stock. Preferred stock could thus 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.

Series A Preferred Stock. All 5,000 shares of our Series A Preferred Stock were previously issued and outstanding and were subsequently converted to shares of common stock in July 2002. Pursuant to the terms of the Series A Preferred Stock, these shares may not be reissued.

Table of Contents

Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock. The Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, or Series C Preferred, is reserved for issuance in connection with the rights outstanding under our Rights Agreement as described below. The Series C Preferred will not be redeemable. Each share of Series C Preferred will be entitled to a minimum preferential quarterly dividend payment of \$1.00 per share but will be entitled to an aggregate dividend of 100 times the dividend declared per share of common stock. In the event of liquidation, the holders of the Series C Preferred will be entitled to a minimum preferential liquidation payment of \$100 per share but will be entitled to an aggregate payment of 100 times the payment made per share of common stock. Each Series C Preferred share will have 100 votes, voting together with the shares of common stock. Finally, in the event of any merger, consolidation or other transaction in which share of common stock are exchanged, each Series C Preferred share will be entitled to receive 100 times the amount of consideration received per share of common stock. These rights are protected by customary anti-dilution provisions. Because of the nature of the Series C Preferred dividend, liquidation and voting rights, the value of the one one-hundredth interest in a Series C Preferred share purchasable upon exercise of each Right should approximate the value of one share of common stock. The Series C Preferred would rank junior to any other series of our preferred stock.

Future Preferred Stock. Our board of directors will determine the rights, preferences, privileges, qualifications, limitations or 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 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. This description will include:

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;

preemption rights, if any;

Table of Contents

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, the shares will be fully paid and nonassessable.

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 General Corporation Law of the State of Delaware, the state of our incorporation, provides that the holders of preferred stock will have the right to vote separately as a class on any proposal involving fundamental changes in the rights of holders of that preferred stock. This right is in addition to any voting rights that may be provided for in the applicable certificate of designation.

Antitakeover Effects of Provisions of Charter Documents and Delaware Law

Charter Documents. The Restated Certificate and our amended and restated bylaws, include a number of provisions that may have the effect of deterring hostile takeovers or delaying or preventing changes in control or management of our company. First, our board of directors is classified into three classes of directors. Under Delaware law, directors of a corporation with a classified board may be removed only for cause unless the corporation's certificate of incorporation provides otherwise. The Restated Certificate does not provide otherwise. In addition, the Restated

Certificate provides that all stockholder action must be effected at a duly called meeting of stockholders and not by a consent in writing. Further, our amended and restated bylaws limit who may call special meetings of our stockholders. The Restated Certificate does not include a provision for cumulative voting for directors. Under cumulative voting, a minority stockholder holding a sufficient percentage of a class of shares may be able to ensure the election of one or more directors. Finally, our amended and restated bylaws establish procedures, including advance notice procedures, with regard to the nomination of candidates for election as directors and stockholder proposals. These and other provisions of the Restated Certificate and our amended and restated bylaws and Delaware law could discourage potential acquisition proposals and could delay or prevent a change in control or management of our company.

Delaware Takeover Statute. We are subject to Section 203 of the General Corporation Law of the State of Delaware, or DGCL, which regulates acquisitions of some Delaware corporations. In general, Section 203

Table of Contents

prohibits, with some exceptions, a publicly held 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:

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 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 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.

Section 203 of the DGCL generally defines a business combination to include any of the following:

any merger or consolidation involving the corporation and the interested stockholder;

any sale, lease, exchange, mortgage, pledge, transfer or other disposition (in one transaction or a series of transactions) involving the interested stockholder of 10% or more of the assets of the corporation (or its majority-owned subsidiary);

subject to exceptions, any transaction that results in the issuance or transfer by the corporation of any stock of the corporation to the interested stockholder;

subject to exceptions, any transaction involving the corporation that has the effect, directly or indirectly, of increasing the proportionate share of the stock or any class or series of the corporation beneficially owned by the interested stockholder; and

the receipt by the interested stockholder of the benefit, directly or indirectly (except proportionately as a stockholder of such corporation), of any loans, advances, guarantees, pledges or other financial benefits, other than certain benefits set forth in Section 203, provided by or through the corporation.

In general, Section 203 defines an interested stockholder as any entity or person beneficially owning 15% or more of the outstanding voting stock of the corporation and any entity or person that is an affiliate or associate of such entity or person.

Section 203 of the DGCL could depress our stock price and delay, discourage or prohibit transactions not approved in advance by our board of directors, such as takeover attempts that might otherwise involve the payment to our stockholders of a premium over the market price of our common stock.

Rights Agreement

We have entered into a stockholder rights agreement, dated as of November 3, 1999, and amended as of October 28, 2009, or the Rights Agreement, pursuant to which each share of our common stock outstanding has attached to it a right, or Right. The Rights trade with our common stock until the earlier to occur of (i) ten days after a public announcement that a person (or a group of affiliated or associated persons) has acquired beneficial ownership of 15% or more of the outstanding common stock, which we refer to as an Acquiring Person, or (ii) ten business days (or such later date as may be determined by action of the board of directors prior to such time as any person or entity becomes an Acquiring Person) following the commencement of, or announcement of

Table of Contents

an intention to make, a tender offer or exchange offer the consummation of which would result in the beneficial ownership by an Acquiring Person of 15% or more of the outstanding common stock. The earlier of these dates is called the Distribution Date.

Following the Distribution Date, the Rights will be evidenced by separate certificates. The Rights are not exercisable until after the Distribution Date. Each Right entitles the holder to purchase, for \$30 per Right, one one-hundredth of a share of Series C Preferred, subject to adjustment. Each one one-hundredth of a share of Series C Preferred has designations and powers, preferences and rights, and the qualifications, limitations and restrictions designed to make it the economic equivalent of a share of common stock. The expiration date of the Rights is October 27, 2019.

In the event that any person (or a group of affiliated or associated persons) becomes an Acquiring Person, proper provision shall be made so that each holder of a Right, other than Rights beneficially owned by the Acquiring Person or any affiliate or associate thereof (which will thereafter be void), will thereafter have the right to receive upon exercise that number of shares of common stock having a market value of two times the exercise price of the Right. This right will commence on the date 10 days following public announcement that a person has become an Acquiring Person (or the effective date of a registration statement relating to distribution of the rights, if later) and terminate 60 days later (subject to adjustment in the event exercise of the rights is enjoined). At the time the rights flip in, they no longer represent the right to purchase shares of Series C Preferred.

In the event that Cerus is acquired in a merger or other business combination transaction or 50% or more of its consolidated assets or earning power are sold to an Acquiring Person, its affiliates or associates or certain other persons in which such persons have an interest, proper provision will be made so that each holder of a Right will thereafter have the right to receive, upon the exercise thereof at the then current exercise price of the Right, that number of shares of common stock of the acquiring company which at the time of such transaction will have a market value of two times the exercise price of the Right.

At any time prior to the earliest of (i) the close of business on the day of the first public announcement that a person has become an Acquiring Person, or (ii) October 27, 2019, the board of directors may redeem the Rights in whole, but not in part, at a price of \$0.001 per Right, or the Redemption Price. In general, the redemption of the Rights may be made effective at such time, on such basis and with such conditions as the board of directors in its sole discretion may establish. Immediately upon any redemption of the Rights, the right to exercise the Rights will terminate and the only right of the holders of Rights will be to receive the Redemption Price.

At any time after the acquisition by a person (or a group of affiliated or associated persons) of beneficial ownership of 15% or more of the outstanding shares of common stock and prior to the acquisition by such person or group of 50% or more of the outstanding shares of common stock, the board of directors may exchange the Rights (other than Rights owned by such person or group which have become void), in whole or in part, at an exchange ratio of one share of common stock, or, under circumstances set forth in the Rights Agreement, cash, property or other securities of Cerus, including fractions of a Series C Preferred (or of a share of a class or series of Cerus preferred stock having equivalent designations and the powers, preferences and rights, and the qualifications, limitations and restrictions), per Right (with value equal to such shares of common stock).

The terms of the Rights may be amended by the board of directors without the consent of the holders of the Rights, except that from and after such time as the Rights are distributed no such amendment may adversely affect the interests of the holders of the Rights (excluding the interest of any Acquiring Person).

The Rights have certain anti-takeover effects. The Rights will cause substantial dilution to a person or group that attempts to acquire us on terms not approved by our board of directors. The Rights should not interfere with any

merger or other business combination approved by our board of directors since the Rights may be amended to permit such acquisition or redeemed by us at \$0.001 per Right prior to the earliest of (a) the time that a person

Table of Contents

or group has acquired beneficial ownership of 15% or more of the common stock or (b) the final expiration date of the rights, October 27, 2019.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Wells Fargo Shareowner Services. The transfer agent for any series of preferred stock that we may offer under this prospectus will be named and described in the applicable prospectus supplement for that series.

Listing on The NASDAQ Global Market

Our common stock is listed on The NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol CERS.

Table of Contents

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.

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 the 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;

Table of Contents

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 depositary 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;

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;

Table of Contents

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.

Table of Contents

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;

Table of Contents

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.

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 at least 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.

Table of Contents

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:

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.

Table of Contents

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 laws of the State of New York, except to the extent that the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 is applicable.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

The following description, together with the additional information we may include in any applicable prospectus supplement and free writing prospectus, summarizes the material terms and provisions of the warrants that we may offer under this prospectus, which may consist of warrants to purchase common stock, preferred stock or debt securities and may be issued in one or more series. Warrants may be offered independently or in combination with common stock, preferred stock or debt securities offered by any prospectus supplement. While the terms we have summarized below will apply generally to any warrants that we may offer under this prospectus, we will describe the particular terms of any series of warrants in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement. The following description of warrants will apply to the warrants offered by this prospectus unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement. The applicable prospectus supplement for a particular series of warrants may specify different or additional terms.

We have filed forms of the warrant agreements and forms of warrant certificates containing the terms of the warrants that may be offered 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. The following summaries of material terms and provisions of the warrants are subject to, and qualified in their entirety by reference to, all the provisions of the form of warrant and/or the warrant agreement and warrant certificate, as applicable, and any supplemental agreements applicable to a particular series of warrants that we may offer under this prospectus. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplement related to the particular series of warrants that we may offer under this prospectus, as well as any related free writing prospectus, and the complete form of warrant and/or the warrant agreement and warrant certificate, as applicable, and any supplemental agreements, that contain the terms of the warrants.

General

We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms of the series of warrants being offered, 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;

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;

Table of Contents

a discussion of material or special U.S. federal income tax considerations, if any, 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. The warrants may be exercised as set forth in the prospectus supplement relating to the warrants offered. Unless we otherwise specify in the applicable prospectus supplement, warrants may be exercised at any time up to the close of business on the expiration date set forth in the prospectus supplement relating to the warrants offered thereby. After the close of business on the expiration date, unexercised warrants will become void.

Upon receipt of payment and the warrant or warrant certificate, as applicable, properly completed and duly executed at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent, if any, or any other office, including ours, indicated in the prospectus supplement, we will, as soon as practicable, issue and deliver the securities purchasable upon such exercise. If less than all of the warrants (or the warrants represented by such warrant certificate) are exercised, a new warrant or a new warrant certificate, as applicable, will be issued for the remaining warrants.

Governing Law

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the warrants and any warrant agreements will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York.

Enforceability of Rights by Holders of Warrants

Each warrant agent, if any, 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.

Table of Contents

LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES

We may 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, depository 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 depository on behalf of other financial institutions that participate in the depository'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 depository or its participants. Consequently, for securities issued in global form, we will recognize only the depository as the holder of the securities, and we will make all payments on the securities to the depository. The depository 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 depository 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 depository'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.

Table of Contents

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 depository 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 depository'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 depository. 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 depository. Unless we specify otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, DTC will be the depository 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 depository, its nominee or a successor depository, 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.

Table of Contents

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 depository, 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 depository 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 depository'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 depository's actions or for its records of ownership interests in a global security, nor do we or any applicable trustee supervise the depository in any way;

the depository 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 depository'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.

Table of Contents

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.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities from time to time pursuant to underwritten public offerings, at-the-market 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.

Table of Contents

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.

Table of Contents

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, San Francisco, California.

EXPERTS

Ernst & Young LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, has audited our consolidated financial statements included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, and the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2016, as set forth in their reports, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus and elsewhere in the registration statement. Our financial statements are incorporated by reference in reliance on Ernst & Young LLP's reports, given on their authority 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 and does not contain all the information set forth in the registration statement. 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>. 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.

Table of Contents

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. 000-21937):

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, which was filed on March 8, 2017, as amended by Amendment No. 1 to Form 10-K, filed with the Commission on May 31, 2017 (as amended, the 2016 Form 10-K);

the information specifically incorporated by reference into the 2016 Form 10-K from our definitive proxy statement relating to our 2017 annual meeting of stockholders, which was filed on April 28, 2017;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2017, which was filed on May 4, 2017;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2017, which was filed on August 4, 2017;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2017, which was filed on November 3, 2017;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K which were filed on April 17, 2017, May 24, 2017, June 8, 2017 and August 2, 2017;

the description of our common stock in our registration statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on January 8, 1997, including all amendments and reports filed for the purpose of updating such description; and

the description of our preferred share purchase rights in our registration statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on October 30, 2009, including all amendments and 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 made 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.

You can request a copy of these filings, at no cost, by writing or telephoning us at the following address or telephone number:

Cerus Corporation

2550 Stanwell Drive

Concord, California 94520

(925) 288-6000

Attention: Investor Relations

Table of Contents

\$50.0 Million

Common Stock

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

BTIG

, 2018