

CERUS CORP
Form 424B5
June 06, 2011
Table of Contents

Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(5)

Registration Nos. 333-154842

and 333-161214

Prospectus Supplement

(To prospectus dated December 17, 2008)

\$20,000,000

Common Stock

We have entered into a sales agreement with McNicoll, Lewis & Vlak LLC, or MLV, relating to shares of our common stock offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. In accordance with the terms of the sales agreement, we may offer and sell shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$20.0 million from time to time through MLV.

Our common stock is listed on The NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol CERS. On June 3, 2011, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Market was \$2.85 per share.

Sales of our common stock, if any, under this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus may be made in sales deemed to be at-the-market equity offerings as defined in Rule 415 promulgated under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, including sales made directly on or through The NASDAQ Global Market, the existing trading market for our common stock, sales made to or through a market maker other than on an exchange or otherwise, in negotiated transactions at market prices prevailing at the time of sale or at prices related to such prevailing market prices, and/or any other method permitted by law. MLV will act as a sales agent on a best efforts basis using commercially reasonable efforts consistent with its normal trading and sales practices, on mutually agreed terms between MLV and us. There is no arrangement for funds to be received in any escrow, trust or similar arrangement.

The compensation to MLV for sales of common stock sold pursuant to the sales agreement will be an aggregate of 3.0% of the gross proceeds of the sales price per share. In connection with the sale of the common stock on our behalf, MLV will be deemed to be an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and the compensation of MLV will be deemed to be underwriting commissions or discounts. We have also agreed to provide indemnification and contribution to MLV with respect to certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. Please read the information contained in or incorporated by reference under the heading Risk Factors beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement, on page 4 of the accompanying prospectus and in the documents incorporated by reference into this 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 supplement or the accompanying prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

Prospectus Supplement dated June 6, 2011

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

	Page
Prospectus Supplement	
<u>About this Prospectus Supplement</u>	S-ii
<u>Prospectus Supplement Summary</u>	S-1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	S-4
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	S-5
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	S-6
<u>Dilution</u>	S-7
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	S-8
<u>Legal Matters</u>	S-9
<u>Experts</u>	S-9
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	S-9
<u>Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference</u>	S-9
	Page
Prospectus	
<u>About this Prospectus</u>	i
<u>Summary</u>	1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	4
<u>Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements</u>	4
<u>Financial Ratios</u>	5
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	5
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	5
<u>Description of Debt Securities</u>	12
<u>Description of Warrants</u>	19
<u>Description of Units</u>	21
<u>Legal Ownership of Securities</u>	22
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	26
<u>Legal Matters</u>	27
<u>Experts</u>	27
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	27
<u>Incorporation By Reference</u>	27
<u>Disclosure of Commission Position on Indemnification for Securities Act Liability</u>	28

Table of Contents

About this Prospectus Supplement

This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus relate to the offering of our common stock. Before buying any of the common stock that we are offering, we urge you to carefully read this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, together with the information incorporated by reference as described under the headings *Where You Can Find More Information* and *Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference* in this prospectus supplement. These documents contain important information that you should consider when making your investment decision.

This document is in two parts. The first part is this prospectus supplement, which describes the specific terms of the securities we are offering 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, including the documents incorporated by reference into the accompanying prospectus, provides more general information, some of which may not apply to this offering. Generally, when we refer to this prospectus, we are referring to the combined document consisting of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. 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 into the accompanying prospectus 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 into the accompanying prospectus—the statement in the document having the later date modifies or supersedes the earlier statement.

You should rely only on the information contained in, or incorporated by reference into, this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and in any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. We have not, and the underwriters have not, authorized any other person to provide you with different information. If anyone provides you with different or inconsistent information, you should not rely on it. We are not, and the underwriters are not, making an offer to sell or soliciting an offer to buy our securities in any jurisdiction in which an offer or solicitation is not authorized or in which the person making that offer or solicitation is not qualified to do so or to anyone to whom it is unlawful to make an offer or solicitation. You should assume that the information appearing in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents incorporated by reference into 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 into 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 entitled *Where You Can Find More Information* and *Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference*.

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 or 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 securities. For a more complete understanding of our company and this offering, we encourage you to read and consider carefully the more detailed information in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, including the information incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, and the information included in any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering, including the information referred to under the heading *Risk Factors* in this prospectus supplement on page S-4, in the accompanying prospectus on page 4 and in the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement.*

Overview

We are a biomedical products company focused on commercializing the INTERCEPT Blood System, or INTERCEPT system, to enhance blood safety. The INTERCEPT system is designed to inactivate blood-borne pathogens in donated blood components intended for transfusion.

We have worldwide commercialization rights for the INTERCEPT Blood System for platelets, plasma and red blood cells and we currently market and sell the INTERCEPT system for both platelets and plasma in a number of countries in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS, the Middle East and selected countries in other regions around the world using our direct sales force or through distributors. The INTERCEPT platelet and plasma systems have both received CE mark approval. We continue to prioritize commercialization of the INTERCEPT Blood System for platelets and plasma in these countries and regions. In addition, we plan to continue development of our INTERCEPT red blood cell system. Subject to the availability of adequate funding, we plan to continue to pursue regulatory approval of the INTERCEPT platelet system, and actively seek regulatory approval of the INTERCEPT plasma system, in the United States.

The following table identifies our products and product development programs and their current status:

Product or Product Under

Development	Product or Development Status	Commercial Rights
INTERCEPT Blood System Platelets	Commercialized in a number of countries in Europe, the CIS, and the Middle East and selected countries in other regions around the world	Worldwide
	United States: Phase III clinical trial completed; Evaluating United States regulatory strategy	
INTERCEPT Blood System Plasma	Commercialized in a number of countries in Europe, the CIS countries, the Middle East and selected countries in other regions around the world	Worldwide
	United States: Orphan drug designation for Thrombotic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (TTP); Phase III clinical trials completed; Evaluating United States regulatory strategy	

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

INTERCEPT Blood System Red Blood Cells

Phase I clinical trial completed in of
2010; Phase III clinical trial planned

Worldwide

S-1

Table of Contents

We recognize growing, but still relatively modest, product revenues from the sale of our platelet and plasma systems. We expect to generate substantial losses, at least until our platelet and plasma systems gain widespread commercial acceptance. Our ability to achieve a profitable level of operations in the future will depend on our ability to successfully commercialize and achieve market acceptance of our blood safety products. We may never achieve a profitable level of operations.

Risks Associated with our Business

Our business is subject to numerous risks, as described more fully and incorporated by reference into the section entitled "Risk Factors" immediately following this prospectus supplement summary. These risks include the following, among others:

The INTERCEPT Blood System may not achieve broad market acceptance.

Our products, blood products treated with the INTERCEPT Blood System and we are subject to extensive regulation by domestic and foreign authorities. If our preclinical and clinical data are not considered sufficient by a country's regulatory authorities to grant marketing approval, we will be unable to commercialize our products and generate revenue in that country. Our red blood cell system requires extensive additional testing and development.

We have limited experience operating a commercial organization. We rely on third parties to market, sell and distribute our products and to maintain customer relationships in certain countries.

Our product design and manufacturing supply chain is highly technical and exposes us to significant risks.

The platelet system is not compatible with some commercial platelet collection methods.

We have used prototype components in our preclinical studies and clinical trials of the INTERCEPT red blood cell system and have not completed the components' commercial design. We will be required to identify and enter into agreements with third parties to manufacture the red blood cell system and related blood component storage solutions.

If our competitors develop and market products that are more effective than our products and product candidates, our commercial opportunity will be reduced or eliminated.

We may be liable and we may need to withdraw our products from the market if our products harm people. We may be liable if an accident occurs in our controlled use of hazardous materials. Our insurance coverage may be inadequate to offset losses we may incur.

If we fail to obtain the capital necessary to fund our future operations or if we are unable to generate positive cash flows from our operations, we will need to curtail planned development or sales and commercialization activities.

We have only a limited operating history, and we expect to continue to generate losses.

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

Virtually all of our research and development activities and the significant majority of our general and administrative activities are performed in or managed from a single site that may be subject to lengthy business interruption in the event of a severe earthquake. We also may suffer loss of computerized information and may be unable to make timely filings with regulatory agencies in the event of catastrophic failure of our data storage and backup systems.

We may not be able to protect our intellectual property or operate our business without infringing the intellectual property rights of others.

As our international operations grow, we may be subject to adverse fluctuations in exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and foreign currencies. Consequently, we may suffer losses.

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 that can be accessed through, our website is not incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. Our website address is included in this document as an inactive textual reference only.

Unless the context indicates otherwise, as used in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, the terms Cerus, Cerus Corporation, we, us and our 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 supplement and the accompanying prospectus are the property of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

The Offering

Common stock offered by us Shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$20.0 million.

Manner of offering At-the-market offering that may be made from time to time through our sales agent, McNicoll, Lewis & Vlak LLC. See Plan of Distribution on page S-8.

Use of Proceeds

We 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. In addition, we may use a portion of the net proceeds for the repayment of indebtedness. See Use of Proceeds on page S-6 of this prospectus supplement.

Risk Factors

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. See the information contained in or incorporated by reference under the heading Risk Factors beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement, on page 4 of the accompanying prospectus and in the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement.

Nasdaq Global Market Listing

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

Table of Contents

Risk Factors

An investment 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 below and discussed under the section entitled "Risk Factors" contained in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2010 and our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2011, which are incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus in their entirety, together with other information in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, the documents incorporated by reference and any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. The risks described in these documents are not the only ones we face, but those that we currently 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 common stock to decline, resulting in a loss of all or part of your investment. Please also read carefully the section below entitled "Forward-Looking Statements."

Additional Risks Related to This Offering

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

Because we have not designated the amount of net proceeds from this offering to be used for any particular purpose, our management will have broad discretion as to the application of the net proceeds from this offering and could use them for purposes other than those contemplated at the time of the offering. Our management may use the net proceeds for corporate purposes that may not improve our financial condition or market value.

You will experience immediate and substantial dilution.

The offering price per share in this offering may exceed the net tangible book value per share of our common stock outstanding prior to this offering. Assuming that an aggregate of 7,017,544 shares of our common stock are sold at a price of \$2.85 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Market on June 3, 2011, for aggregate gross proceeds of \$20.0 million, and after deducting after deducting commissions and estimated aggregate offering expenses payable by us, you will experience immediate dilution of \$2.09 per share, representing the difference between our as adjusted net tangible book value per share as of March 31, 2011 after giving effect to this offering and the assumed offering price. The exercise of outstanding stock options and warrants will result in further dilution of your investment. See the section entitled "Dilution" below for a more detailed illustration of the dilution you would incur if you participate in this offering.

You may experience future dilution as a result of future equity offerings.

In order to raise additional capital, we may in the future offer additional shares of our common stock or other securities convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock at prices that may not be the same as the price per share in this offering. We may sell shares or other securities in any other offering at a price per share that is less than the price per share paid by investors in this offering, and investors purchasing shares or other securities in the future could have rights superior to existing stockholders. The price per share at which we sell additional shares of our common stock, or securities convertible or exchangeable into common stock, in future transactions may be higher or lower than the price per share paid by investors in this offering.

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 and Section 21E of the Exchange Act. These statements relate to future events or to our future operating or financial performance and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors which may cause our actual results, performance or achievements to be materially different from any future results, performances or achievements expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements may include, but are not limited to, statements about:

our ability to commercialize and achieve market acceptance of the INTERCEPT Blood Systems;

the successful completion of our research, development and clinical programs and our ability to manage cost increases associated with pre-clinical and clinical development for the INTERCEPT Blood Systems;

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

our ability to protect our intellectual property and operate our business without infringing upon the intellectual property rights of others; 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 may, will, should, could, would, expects, plans, anticipates, believes, estimates, projects, predicts, potential and similar expressions intended to identify forward-looking statements. These statements represent our current views with respect to future events and 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 supplement and the accompanying prospectus in their entirety, many of these risks under the heading Risk Factors beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement. Also, these forward-looking statements represent our estimates and assumptions only as of the date of the document containing the applicable statement. Unless required by law, we undertake no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements to reflect new information or future events or developments. Thus, you should not assume that our silence over time means that actual events are bearing out as expressed or implied in such forward-looking statements.

You should read this prospectus 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 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.

You should rely only on the information contained in, or incorporated by reference into, this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and in any free writing prospectus that we have authorized for use in connection with this offering. We and the underwriters for this offering have not authorized any other person to provide you with different information. The securities offered under this prospectus supplement and accompanying prospectus are not being offered in any state where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus, as applicable, or that any information incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is accurate as of any date other than the date of the document so incorporated by reference.

Table of Contents

Use of Proceeds

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 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 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**Dilution**

If you invest in this offering, your ownership interest will be diluted to the extent of the difference between the public offering price per unit and the as adjusted net tangible book value per share after giving effect to this offering. We calculate net tangible book value per share by dividing the net tangible book value, which is tangible assets less total liabilities, by the number of outstanding shares of our common stock. Dilution represents the difference between the portion of the amount per share paid by purchasers of shares in this offering and the as adjusted net tangible book value per share of our common stock immediately after giving effect to this offering. Our net tangible book value as of March 31, 2011 was approximately \$15.9 million, or \$0.33 per share.

After giving effect to the sale of our common stock in the aggregate amount of \$20.0 million at an assumed offering price of \$2.85 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Market on June 3, 2011, and after deducting estimated offering commissions and expenses payable by us, our net tangible book value as of March 31, 2010 would have been \$41.6 million, or \$0.76 per share of common stock. This represents an immediate increase in the net tangible book value of \$0.43 per share to our existing stockholders and an immediate dilution in net tangible book value of \$2.09 per share to new investors. The following table illustrates this per share dilution:

Assumed public offering price per share	\$ 2.85
Net tangible book value per share as of March 31, 2011	\$ 0.33
Increase in net tangible book value per share attributable to this offering	\$ 0.43
As adjusted net tangible book value per share as of March 31, 2011, after giving effect to this offering	\$ 0.76
Dilution per share to new investors purchasing shares in this offering	\$ 2.09

The table above assumes for illustrative purposes that an aggregate of 7,017,544 shares of our common stock are sold at a price of \$2.85 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Market on June 3, 2011, for aggregate gross proceeds of \$20.0 million. The shares sold in this offering, if any, will be sold from time to time at various prices. An increase of \$0.50 per share in the price at which the shares are sold from the assumed offering price of \$2.85 per share shown in the table above, assuming all of our common stock in the aggregate amount of \$20.0 million is sold at that price, would increase our adjusted net tangible book value per share after the offering to \$0.78 per share and would increase the dilution in net tangible book value per share to new investors in this offering to \$2.57 per share, after deducting commissions and estimated aggregate offering expenses payable by us. A decrease of \$0.50 per share in the price at which the shares are sold from the assumed offering price of \$2.85 per share shown in the table above, assuming all of our common stock in the aggregate amount of \$20.0 million is sold at that price, would decrease our adjusted net tangible book value per share after the offering to \$0.74 per share and would decrease the dilution in net tangible book value per share to new investors in this offering to \$1.61 per share, after deducting commissions and estimated aggregate offering expenses payable by us. This information is supplied for illustrative purposes only.

The above discussion and table are based on 47,608,700 shares of our common stock issued and outstanding as of March 31, 2011 and excludes the following, all as of March 31, 2011:

6,944,000 shares of common stock issuable upon the exercise of outstanding stock options with a weighted-average exercise price of \$5.44 per share;

2,400,000 shares of common stock issuable upon the exercise of outstanding warrants with an exercise price of \$2.90 per share;

3,684,210 shares of common stock issuable upon the exercise of outstanding warrants with an exercise price of \$3.20 per share;

332,700 shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of 3,327 shares of outstanding Series B Preferred Stock;

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

72,280 shares of common stock issuable upon the vesting of outstanding restricted stock units; and

up to an aggregate of 6,936,043 shares of common stock reserved for future issuance under our 2008 Equity Incentive Plan and 1996 Employee Stock Purchase Plan.

To the extent that options or warrants outstanding as of March 31, 2011 have been or are exercised, or other shares are issued, investors purchasing shares in this offering could 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.

S-7

Table of Contents

Plan Of Distribution

We have entered into an At-The-Market Issuance Sales Agreement with McNicoll, Lewis & Vlak LLC, or MLV, under which we may issue and sell shares of our common stock having aggregate sales proceeds of up to \$20.0 million from time to time through MLV acting as agent. MLV may sell the common stock by any method that is deemed to be an at-the-market equity offering as defined in Rule 415 promulgated under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, including sales made directly on or through The NASDAQ Global Market or any other existing trading market for the common stock in the US or to or through a market maker. MLV may also sell the common stock in privately negotiated transactions, subject to our prior approval.

Each time we wish to issue and sell common stock under the sales agreement, we will notify MLV of the number of shares to be issued, the dates on which such sales are anticipated to be made and any minimum price below which sales may not be made. Once we have so instructed MLV, unless MLV declines to accept the terms of this notice, MLV has agreed to use its commercially reasonable efforts consistent with its normal trading and sales practices to sell such shares up to the amount specified on such terms. The obligations of MLV under the sales agreement to sell our common stock is subject to a number of conditions that we must meet.

The settlement between us and MLV is generally anticipated to occur on the third trading day following the date on which the sale was made. Sales of our common stock as contemplated in this prospectus supplement will be settled through the facilities of The Depository Trust Company or by such other means as we and MLV may agree upon. There is no arrangement for funds to be received in an escrow, trust or similar arrangement.

We will pay MLV a commission equal to an aggregate of 3.0% of the gross proceeds we receive from the sales of our common stock. Because there is no minimum offering amount required as a condition to close this offering, the actual total public offering amount, commissions and proceeds to us, if any, are not determinable at this time. In connection with the sale of the common stock on our behalf, MLV may, and will with respect to sales effected in an at-the-market-offering, be deemed to be an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and the compensation of MLV will be deemed to be underwriting commissions or discounts. We have agreed to provide indemnification and contribution to MLV with respect to certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act. We estimate that the total expenses for the offering, excluding compensation payable to MLV under the terms of the sales agreement, will be approximately \$105,000.

The offering of our common stock pursuant to the sales agreement will terminate upon the earlier of (i) the sale of all of our common stock provided for in this prospectus supplement, or (ii) termination of the sales agreement as permitted therein. MLV may terminate the sales agreement at any time in certain circumstances, including the occurrence of a material adverse change with respect to us that, in MLV's sole judgment, makes it impracticable or inadvisable to market the shares, if there has occurred any material adverse change in the U.S. financial markets or international financial markets, which in MLV's sole judgment makes it impracticable to market the shares, if trading in the shares has been suspended or limited by the Securities Exchange Commission or The NASDAQ Global Market, or the Exchange, or if trading generally has been suspended or limited by Exchange, if any suspension of trading of any shares of the Company on any exchange or over-the-counter market shall have occurred and be continuing, if there is a major disruption of securities settlements or clearance services in the U.S. which shall be continuing, or if a banking moratorium has been declared in the U.S. Federal or New York authorities. We and MLV may each terminate the sales agreement at any time upon 10 days prior notice.

This summary of the material provisions of the sales agreement does not purport to be a complete statement of its terms and conditions. A copy of the sales agreement is filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission and is incorporated by reference into the registration statement of which this prospectus supplement is a part. See [Where You Can Find More Information](#) below.

To the extent required by Regulation M, MLV will not engage in any market making activities involving our common stock while the offering is ongoing under this prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

Legal Matters

Cooley LLP, San Francisco, California, will pass upon the validity of the securities offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. LeClairRyan, P.C., New York, New York, is counsel for MLV in connection with this offering.

Experts

The consolidated financial statements of Cerus Corporation included in Cerus Corporation's Annual Report (Form 10-K) for the year ended December 31, 2010, and the effectiveness of Cerus Corporation's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2010, have been audited by Ernst & Young LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, as set forth in their reports thereon included therein, and incorporated herein by reference. Such financial statements are, and audited financial statements to be included in subsequently filed documents will be, incorporated herein in reliance upon the reports of Ernst & Young LLP pertaining to such financial statements and the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of the respective dates (to the extent covered by consents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission) given on the authority of such firm 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 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 into 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.

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 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 into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus will automatically update and supersede prior 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:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2010, which was filed on March 16, 2011;

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2011, which was filed on May 6, 2011;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K which were filed on January 21, 2011, March 2, 2011, March 3, 2011 (reporting under Items 1.01 and 2.03), April 20, 2011 (as amended on May 18, 2011) and May 18, 2011;

the information specifically incorporated by reference into our 2010 Annual Report on Form 10-K referred to above from our definitive proxy statement relating to our 2011 annual meeting of stockholders, which was filed on April 22, 2011;

Table of Contents

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:

Cerus Corporation

2550 Stanwell Drive

Concord, CA. 94520

(925) 288-6000

Attention: Investor Relations

S-10

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS

\$200,000,000

Common Stock, Preferred Stock,

Debt Securities,

Warrants and Units

CERUS CORPORATION

From time to time, we may offer up to \$200,000,000 of any combination of the securities described in this prospectus, either individually or in units.

This prospectus provides a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities, we will provide specific terms of the securities offered in a supplement 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 any documents incorporated by reference before you invest in any securities. This prospectus may not be used to consummate a sale of securities unless accompanied by the applicable prospectus supplement.

Our common stock is traded on the Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol CERS. On October 28, 2008, the last reported sales price of our common stock was \$1.92 per share. The applicable prospectus supplement will contain information, where applicable, as to any other listing on the Nasdaq Global Market or any securities market or other exchange of the securities, if any, covered by the prospectus supplement.

INVESTING IN OUR SECURITIES INVOLVES RISKS. YOU SHOULD REVIEW CAREFULLY THE RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES DESCRIBED 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.

We will sell these securities directly to investors, through agents designated from time to time or to or through underwriters or dealers. For additional information on the methods of sale, you should refer to the section entitled Plan of Distribution in this prospectus. If any underwriters are involved in the sale of any securities with respect to which this prospectus is being delivered, the names of such underwriters and any applicable commissions or discounts 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 December 17, 2008

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u>	i
<u>SUMMARY</u>	1
<u>RISK FACTORS</u>	4
<u>SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u>	4
<u>FINANCIAL RATIOS</u>	5
<u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u>	5
<u>DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK</u>	5
<u>DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES</u>	12
<u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS</u>	19
<u>DESCRIPTION OF UNITS</u>	21
<u>LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES</u>	22
<u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u>	26
<u>LEGAL MATTERS</u>	27
<u>EXPERTS</u>	27
<u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u>	27
<u>INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE</u>	27
<u>DISCLOSURE OF COMMISSION POSITION ON INDEMNIFICATION FOR SECURITIES ACT LIABILITY</u>	28

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is a part of a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, utilizing a shelf registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings up to a total dollar amount of \$200,000,000. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities under this shelf registration, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain 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 information contained in this prospectus or in any documents that we have incorporated by reference into this prospectus. You should read this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, together with the information incorporated herein by reference as described under the heading [Where You Can Find More Information](#).

You should rely only on the information that we have provided or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you. We have not authorized any dealer, salesman or other person to give any information or to make any representation other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you. You must not rely upon any information or representation not contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus or the accompanying prospectus supplement. This prospectus and the accompanying supplement to this prospectus do not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy any securities other than the registered securities to which they relate, nor do this prospectus and the accompanying supplement to this prospectus constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy securities in any jurisdiction to any person to whom it is unlawful to make such offer or solicitation in such jurisdiction. You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus is accurate on any date subsequent to the date set forth on the front of the document or that any information we have incorporated by reference is correct on any date subsequent to the date of the document incorporated by reference, even though this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus is delivered or securities sold on a later date.

Table of Contents

SUMMARY

Prospectus Summary

This summary highlights selected information from 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, including the risks of investing discussed under Risk Factors beginning on page 4, the information incorporated by reference, including our financial statements, and the exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

Throughout this prospectus, references to Cerus, the Company, we, us, and our refer to Cerus Corporation.

Our Company

We are a biomedical products company focused on commercializing the INTERCEPT Blood System to enhance blood safety. The INTERCEPT system is designed to inactivate blood-borne pathogens in donated blood components intended for transfusion. We currently market the INTERCEPT system for both platelets and plasma in Europe and the Middle East. We are also pursuing regulatory approvals in the United States and other countries. The INTERCEPT red blood cell system is currently in clinical development.

We were incorporated in California in 1991 and reincorporated in Delaware in 1996. Our wholly-owned subsidiary, Cerus Europe B.V. was formed in the Netherlands in 2006. Our principal executive offices located at 2411 Stanwell Drive, Concord, California, 94520 and our telephone number is (925) 288-6000.

The Securities We May Offer

We may offer shares of our common stock and preferred stock, various series of debt securities and warrants to purchase any of such securities, either individually or in units, with a total value of up to \$200 million from time to time under this prospectus, together with any applicable prospectus supplement and related free writing prospectus, at prices and on terms to be determined by market conditions at the time of 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, 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, if applicable;

original issue discount, if any;

rates and times of payment of interest or dividends, if any;

redemption, conversion, exchange or sinking fund terms, 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;

ranking;

restrictive covenants, if any;

voting or other rights, if any; and

important United States federal income tax considerations.

Table of Contents

A prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus or in 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.

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

the names of those underwriters or agents;

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 offer shares of our common stock from time to time. Holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote per share on all other matters that require stockholder approval. Subject to any preferential rights of any outstanding preferred stock, holders of our common stock are entitled to dividends when and if declared by the board of directors.

Preferred Stock. We may offer shares of our preferred stock from time to time, in one or more series. Under our certificate of incorporation, our board of directors has the authority to designate up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock 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 have 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. To date, our board of directors has also designated 3,327 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series B Preferred Stock and 250,000 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock. Each series is described in greater detail in this prospectus under **Description of Capital Stock Preferred Stock**.

We will fix the rights, preferences, privileges, qualifications and restrictions of the preferred stock of each series that we sell under this prospectus and applicable prospectus supplements in the certificate of designation relating to that series. We will incorporate by reference into the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part the form of any certificate of designation that describes the terms of the series of preferred stock we are offering before the issuance of the related series of preferred stock. We urge you to read the prospectus supplements and any 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 offer 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 unsubordinated debt that we may have and may be secured or unsecured. 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 or some portion of our indebtedness. Any convertible debt securities that we issue will be convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or other securities of ours. Conversion may be mandatory or at the holder's option and would be at prescribed conversion rates.

The debt securities will be issued under one or more documents called indentures, which are contracts between us and a trustee for the holders of the debt securities. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the debt securities. We urge you, however, to read the prospectus supplements and any 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 indentures that contain the terms of the debt securities. Forms of indentures have been filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and supplemental indentures and forms of debt securities containing the terms of debt securities being offered will be incorporated by reference into the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part from reports we file with the SEC.

Table of Contents

Warrants. We may offer warrants for the purchase of our common stock, preferred stock and/or debt securities in one or more series, from time to time. We may issue warrants independently or together with common stock, preferred stock and/or debt securities, and the warrants may be attached to or separate from those securities.

The warrants will be evidenced by warrant certificates issued under one or more warrant agreements, which are contracts between us and an agent for the holders of the warrants. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the warrants. We urge you, however, to read the prospectus supplements and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you related to the series of warrants being offered, as well as the complete warrant agreements and warrant certificates that contain the terms of the warrants. Forms of warrant agreements and warrant certificates relating to warrants for the purchase of common stock, preferred stock and debt securities have been filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and complete warrant agreements and warrant certificates containing the terms of the warrants being offered will be incorporated by reference into the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part from reports we file with the SEC.

Units. We may offer units consisting of common stock, preferred stock, debt securities and/or warrants to purchase any of such securities in one or more series. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the units. We urge you, however, to read the prospectus supplements and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you related to the series of units being offered, as well as the unit agreements that contain the terms of the units. We will file as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from a current report on Form 8-K that we file with the SEC, the form of unit agreement and any supplemental agreements that describe the terms of the series of units we are offering before the issuance of the related series of units.

We will evidence each series of units by unit certificates that we will issue under a separate agreement. We will enter into the unit agreements with a unit agent. Each unit agent will be a bank or trust company that we select. We will indicate the name and address of the unit agent in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to a particular series of units.

THIS PROSPECTUS MAY NOT BE USED TO OFFER OR SELL ANY SECURITIES UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. You should carefully consider the risk factors incorporated by reference to our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC in addition to the other information contained in this prospectus, as updated by our subsequent filings under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act, and the risk factors and other information contained in any applicable prospectus supplement and in any related free writing prospectuses in connection with a specific offering, and in the documents incorporated herein or therein before deciding whether to purchase any of the securities being registered pursuant to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. Each of the risk factors could adversely affect our business, operating results and financial condition, as well as adversely affect the value of an investment in our securities, and the occurrence of any of these risks might cause you to lose all or part of your investment.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference contain forward-looking statements. These are based on our management's current beliefs, expectations and assumptions about future events, conditions and results and on information currently available to us. Discussions containing these forward-looking statements may be found, among other places, in the Sections entitled Business, Risk Factors and Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations incorporated by reference from our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and in our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, as well as any amendments thereto, filed with the SEC. Within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Act, and Section 21E of the Exchange Act, these forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, statements about: our ability to commercialize and achieve market acceptance of the INTERCEPT Blood System, the successful completion of our research, development and clinical programs our ability to manage cost increases associated with pre-clinical and clinical development for the INTERCEPT Blood System, our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals of the INTERCEPT Blood System, our ability to protect our intellectual property and operate our business without infringing upon the intellectual property rights of others and our estimates regarding the sufficiency of our cash resources.

All statements, other than statements of historical fact, included or incorporated herein regarding our strategy, future operations, financial position, future revenues, projected costs, plans, prospectus and objectives are forward-looking statements. In some cases, you can identify forward-looking statements by terms such as anticipate, believe, could, estimate, expect, intend, may, plan, potential, predict, will, would and similar expressions. These statements involve risks, uncertainties and other factors that may cause our actual results, performance, time frames or achievements to be materially different from any future results, performance, time frames or achievements expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements. Risks, uncertainties and other factors that might cause or contribute to such differences include, but are not limited to, those discussed in the Section entitled Risk Factors in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and in our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, as well as any amendments thereto filed with the SEC. Given these risks, uncertainties and other factors, many of which are beyond our control, you should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements.

Except as required by law, we assume no obligation to update these forward-looking statements publicly, or to revise any forward-looking statements to reflect events or developments occurring after the date of this prospectus, even if new information becomes available in the future.

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 periods presented. Our net losses were insufficient to cover fixed charges and combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends in each of the years ended December 31, 2003, 2004, and 2007 and in the six months ended June 30, 2008. 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,					Six Months Ended June 30,
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Ratio of earnings to fixed charges			21.77	7.32		
Ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends			21.77	7.32		
Deficiency of earnings available to cover fixed charges	\$ (41,834)	\$ (12,494)			\$ (38,528)	\$ (14,123)
Deficiency of earnings available to cover combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends	\$ (41,834)	\$ (12,494)			\$ (38,528)	\$ (14,123)

USE OF PROCEEDS

Except as described in any applicable prospectus supplement and in any free writing prospectuses in connection with a specific offering, we currently intend to use the net proceeds from the sale of the securities offered hereby to fund the costs of clinical research and development activities, both on-going and planned, to support the marketing and commercialization of the INTERCEPT Blood System and for general corporate purposes, including working capital. We may also use a portion of the net proceeds to invest in or acquire businesses or technologies that we believe are complementary to our own, although we have no current plans, commitments or agreements with respect to any acquisitions as of the date of this prospectus. Pending these uses, we intend to invest the net proceeds in investment-grade, interest-bearing securities.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

As of the date of this prospectus, our certificate of incorporation authorizes us to issue 50,000,000 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 October 23, 2008, approximately 32,543,826 shares of common stock were outstanding and 3,327 shares of Series B Preferred Stock were outstanding. Our board of directors have 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. To date, our board of directors has also designated 3,327 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series B Preferred Stock and 250,000 of the 5,000,000 authorized shares of preferred stock as Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, which series is described below under "Rights Plan".

The following summary describes the material terms of our capital stock and stockholder rights plan. The description of our capital stock and stockholder rights plan is qualified by reference to our amended and restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, our bylaws, as amended, the certificate of designation for our Series B Preferred Stock, the certificate of designation for our Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, and our stockholder rights plan, as amended, which are incorporated by reference as exhibits into the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

Table of Contents

Common Stock

The holders of 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 the 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. All outstanding shares of common stock are, and all shares of common stock to be outstanding upon the closing of this offering 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 our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation, or 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. Upon regulatory approval of the INTERCEPT platelet system in Europe, all 5,000 of the then outstanding shares of Series A preferred stock were converted to shares of common stock in July 2002. We issued a total of 129,968 shares of common stock to Baxter Healthcare Corporation, the holder of the Series A preferred stock at that time, in connection with this conversion.

Series B Preferred Stock. There are currently 3,327 shares of Series B preferred stock outstanding. The holders of Series B preferred stock have no voting rights, except as required under the General Corporation Law of Delaware, and as follows: (i) without first obtaining the affirmative vote or written consent of the holders of at least a majority of the outstanding shares of Series B preferred stock, voting together as a separate class, we may not authorize or issue shares of any class or series of stock, or reclassify any class or series of stock, into shares having preference or priority over the Series B preferred stock as to voting, liquidation preference or conversion rights; and (ii) to determine the fair market value of any securities delivered to the holders of the Series B preferred stock pursuant to a transaction treated as a liquidation of the Company. Upon any liquidation, dissolution, or winding up of our company, before any payment or distribution of assets shall be made to the holders of common stock or any other class or series of stock ranking junior to the Series B preferred stock with respect to liquidation preference, the holders of Series B preferred stock shall be entitled to be paid out of the assets of the company an amount per share of Series B preferred stock equal to \$2,854.793, the original issue price.

We have the right to redeem, at the original issue price, all, but not less than all, of the Series B preferred stock at any time. At any time, each share of Series B preferred stock may, at the option of the holder, be converted at any time into that number of shares of common stock equal to the original issue price divided by 100. However, in the event that the approval of our stockholders is required pursuant to Rule 4460(i) prior to the issuance of any of the shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of the Series B preferred stock, we must obtain such approval by the conversion date, or, if such approval is not obtained, we must redeem any shares of Series B preferred stock that would be convertible into shares of common stock in excess of the limitation specified in Rule 4460(i).

Table of Contents

Neither the Series B preferred stock nor any right to receive redemption payments may be assigned, transferred, hypothecated or otherwise alienated by a Series B preferred stock holder without our prior written consent, except (i) in connection with, and to the transferee of, all or substantially all of the business and assets of such holder, or (ii) to a direct or indirect wholly owned subsidiary of Baxter.

Future Preferred Stock. Our board of directors will fix the rights, preferences, privileges, qualifications and restrictions of the preferred stock of each series that we sell under this prospectus and applicable prospectus supplements in the certificate of designation relating to that series. We will incorporate by reference into the registration statements of which this prospectus is a part the form of any certificate of designation that describes the terms of the series of preferred stock we are offering before the issuance of the related series of preferred stock. This description will include:

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;

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

whether the preferred stock will be exchangeable into 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;

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;

Table of Contents

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 and will not have, or be subject to, any preemptive or similar rights.

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. Our Restated Certificate and Amended and Restated Bylaws, or 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. Our 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 Bylaws limit who may call special meetings of the stockholders. Our 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 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 our Restated Certificate and 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 prohibits, with some exceptions, a publicly held Delaware corporation from engaging in a business combination with an interested stockholder for a period of three years following the date of the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder, unless:

the board of directors of the corporation approved the business combination or the other transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder prior to the date of the business combination or other transaction;

upon consummation of the transaction that resulted in the person becoming an interested stockholder, the person owned at least 85% of the voting stock of the corporation outstanding at the time the transaction commenced, excluding shares owned by persons who are directors and also officers of the corporation and shares issued under employee stock plans under 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

on or subsequent to the date the person became an interested stockholder, the board of directors of the corporation approved the business combination and the stockholders of the corporation authorized the business combination at an annual or special meeting of stockholders by the affirmative vote of at least 66-2/3% of the outstanding stock of the corporation 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;

Table of Contents

any sale, transfer, pledge or other disposition of 10% or more of the corporation's assets or outstanding stock involving the interested stockholder;

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

any transaction involving the corporation that has the effect of increasing the proportionate share of its stock owned by the interested stockholder; or

the receipt by the interested stockholder of the benefit of any loans, advances, guarantees, pledges or other financial benefits provided by or through the corporation.

In general, Section 203 defines an interested stockholder as any person who, together with the person's affiliates and associates, owns, or within three years prior to the determination of interested stockholder status did own, 15% or more of a corporation's voting stock.

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 Plan

On November 3, 1999 our board of directors approved the adoption of a Share Purchase Rights Plan, or the Rights Plan. Terms of the Rights Plan provide for a dividend distribution of one preferred share purchase right, or a Right, for each outstanding share of common stock, par value \$.001 per share of the Company. The dividend is payable on the record date of November 23, 1999 to our stockholders of record on that date. Each Right entitles the registered holder to purchase from us one one-hundredth of a share of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, par value \$.001 per share, at a price of \$170 per one one-hundredth of a share of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, subject to adjustment, or the Purchase Price. Each one one-hundredth of a share of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock has designations and powers, preferences and rights, and the qualifications, limitations and restrictions which make its value approximately equal to the value of a share of our common stock. The description and terms of the Rights are set forth in that certain Rights Agreement, dated as of November 3, 1999 entered into between the Company and Norwest Bank Minnesota, N.A., as rights agent.

Initially, the Rights will be evidenced by the stock certificates representing the shares of common stock then outstanding and no separate certificate for the Rights will be distributed. Until the earlier to occur of (a) the date of a public announcement that a person, entity or group of affiliated or associated persons have acquired beneficial ownership of 15% or more of the outstanding shares of common stock (such acquiring person, entity or group of affiliated or associated persons being called an Acquiring Person) or (b) 10 business days (or such later date as may be determined by action of our board of directors prior to such time as any person or entity becomes an Acquiring Person) following the commencement of, or announcement of an intention to commence, a tender offer or exchange offer the consummation of which would result in any person or entity becoming an Acquiring Person (the earlier of such dates being called the Distribution Date), the Rights will be evidenced, with respect to any of the common stock certificates outstanding as of the record date, by such common stock certificate with or without a copy of the Summary of Rights, which is included in the Rights Agreement as Exhibit C thereof.

Until the Distribution Date, the Rights will be transferable with and only with the shares of our common stock subject to the Rights. Until the Distribution Date (or earlier redemption or expiration of the Rights), new certificates for shares of common stock issued after the record date, upon transfer or new issuance of common stock, will contain a notation incorporating the Rights Agreement by reference. Until the Distribution Date (or earlier redemption or expiration of the Rights), the surrender or transfer of any certificates for shares of common stock outstanding as of the record date, even without such notation or a copy of the Summary of Rights being attached thereto, will also constitute the transfer of the Rights associated with the shares of common stock represented by such certificate. As soon as practicable following the Distribution Date, separate certificates evidencing the Rights, or Rights Certificates, will be mailed to holders of record of the outstanding shares of common stock as of the close of business on the Distribution Date and such separate Right Certificates alone will evidence the Rights.

Table of Contents

The Rights are not exercisable until the Distribution Date. The Rights will expire on November 3, 2009 unless the Rights are earlier redeemed or exchanged by us, in each case, as described below.

The purchase price payable, and the number of shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock or other property, upon exercise of the Rights are subject to adjustment from time to time to prevent dilution (a) in the event of a stock dividend on, or a subdivision, combination or reclassification of, the Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, (b) upon the grant to holders of the Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock of certain rights or warrants to subscribe for or purchase Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock at a price, or securities convertible into Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock with a conversion price, less than the then current market price of the Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock or (c) upon the distribution to holders of the Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock of evidences of indebtedness or assets (excluding regular periodic cash dividends paid out of earnings or retained earnings or dividends payable in shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock) or of subscription rights or warrants (other than those referred to above). The exercise of Rights for shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock is at all times subject to the availability of a sufficient number of authorized but unissued shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock.

The number of outstanding Rights and the number of one one-hundredths of a share of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock issuable upon exercise of each Right are also subject to adjustment in the event of a stock split of the common stock or a stock dividend on the common stock payable in common stock or subdivisions, consolidation or combinations of the common stock occurring, in any case, prior to the Distribution Date.

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

In the event that any person or 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 and its associates and affiliates (which will thereafter be void), will for a 60-day period 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 (or, if such number of shares is not and cannot be authorized, we may issue shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, cash, debt, stock or a combination thereof in exchange for the Rights). This right will terminate 60 days after the date on which the Rights become nonredeemable (as described below), unless there is an injunction or similar obstacle to exercise of the Rights, in which event this right will terminate 60 days after the date on which the Rights again become exercisable. In the event that any person or group of affiliated or associated persons becomes an Acquiring Person, the Rights will no longer represent the right to purchase shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock.

Generally, under the Plan, an Acquiring Person shall not be deemed to include (a) the Company, (b) a subsidiary of the Company, (c) any employee benefit or compensation plan of the Company, (d) any entity holding shares of common stock for or pursuant to the terms of any such employee benefit or compensation plan or (e) an Excluded Stockholder, as defined under the Rights Plan. In addition, except under limited circumstances, no person or entity shall become an Acquiring Person as the result of the acquisition of shares of common stock by us which, by reducing the number of shares outstanding, increases the proportionate number of shares beneficially owned by such person or entity to 15% or more of the shares of common stock then outstanding. Baxter Healthcare Corporation, or Baxter, and its associates and affiliates will be an Excluded Stockholder so long as they hold, in the aggregate, 20.1% or less of our outstanding shares of common stock, excluding for this purpose shares of common stock deemed to be owned through Baxter's ownership of share of our Series B Preferred Stock as a result of transactions contemplated by that certain Series B Preferred Stock Purchase Agreement between Baxter and us dated June 30, 1998.

Table of Contents

In the event that we are 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 associates or affiliates 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 after an Acquiring Person becomes an Acquiring Person and prior to the acquisition by such Acquiring Person of 50% or more of our outstanding shares of common stock, our 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 our common stock, or one one-hundredth of a share of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock, per Right (or, at our election, we may issue cash, debt, stock or a combination thereof in exchange for the Rights), subject to adjustment.

With certain exceptions, no adjustment in the Purchase Price will be required until cumulative adjustments require an adjustment of at least 1% in such Purchase Price. No fractional shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock will be issued (other than fractions which are integral multiples of the number of one one-hundredths of a share of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock issuable upon the exercise of one Right, which may, at our election, be evidenced by depository receipts), and in lieu thereof, an adjustment in cash will be made based on the market price of the shares of Series C Junior Participating Preferred Stock on the last trading day prior to the date of exercise.

At any time prior to the earliest of (a) the day of the first public announcement that a person has become an Acquiring Person or (b) November 3, 2009, our board of directors may redeem the Rights in whole, but not in part, at a price of \$0.01 per Right, the Redemption Price. Following the expiration of the above periods, the Rights become nonredeemable. 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.

The terms of the Rights may be amended by our 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 interest of the holders of the Rights excluding the interests of an Acquiring Person.

Until a Right is exercised, the holder thereof, as such, will have no rights as a stockholder of the Company, including, without limitation, the right to vote or to receive dividends.

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 \$.001 per Right prior to the earliest of (a) the time that a person or group has acquired beneficial ownership of 15% or more of the common stock or (b) the final expiration date of the rights, November 3, 2009.

Transfer Agent And Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Wells Fargo Shareowner Services.

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

The following description, together with the additional information we include in any applicable prospectus supplements or free writing prospectuses, summarizes the material terms and provisions of the debt securities that we may offer under this prospectus. We may issue debt securities, 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 future debt securities 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 or free writing prospectus. The terms of any debt securities we offer under a prospectus supplement may differ from the terms we describe below. However, no prospectus supplement shall fundamentally change the terms that are set forth in this prospectus or offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of its effectiveness. As of the date of this prospectus, we have no outstanding registered debt securities. Unless the context requires otherwise, whenever we refer to the indentures, we also are referring to any supplemental indentures that specify the terms of a particular series of debt securities.

We will issue any senior debt securities under the senior indenture that we will enter into with the trustee named in the senior indenture. We will issue any subordinated debt securities under the subordinated indenture that we will enter into with the trustee named in the subordinated indenture. We have filed forms of these documents as exhibits 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 indentures will be qualified under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, or the Trust Indenture Act. We use the term trustee to refer to either the trustee under the senior indenture or the trustee under the subordinated indenture, as applicable.

The following summaries of material provisions of the senior debt securities, the subordinated debt securities and the indentures are subject to, and qualified in their 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 indentures that contains the terms of the debt securities. Except as we may otherwise indicate, the terms of the senior indenture and the subordinated indenture are identical.

General

The terms of each series of debt securities will be established by or pursuant to a resolution of our board of directors and set forth or determined in the manner provided in an officers certificate or by a supplement indenture. Debt securities may be issued in separate series without limitation as to aggregate principal amount. We may specify a maximum aggregate principal amount for the debt securities of any series. We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms of the series of debt securities being offered, including:

the title;

the principal amount being offered, and if a series, the total amount authorized and the total amount outstanding;

any limit on the amount that may be issued;

whether or not we will issue the series of debt securities in global form, and, if so, the terms and who the depository will be;

the maturity date;

Table of Contents

whether and under what circumstances, if any, we will pay additional amounts on any debt securities held by a person who is not a United States person for tax purposes, and whether we can redeem the debt securities if we have to pay such additional amounts;

the annual interest rate, 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;

whether or not the debt securities will be secured or unsecured, and the terms of any secured debt;

the terms of the subordination of any series of subordinated debt;

the place where payments will be payable;

restrictions on transfer, sale or other assignment, if any;

our right, if any, to defer payment of interest and the maximum length of any such deferral period;

the date, if any, after which, and the price 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, if any, on which, and the price 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;

whether the indenture will restrict our ability or the ability of our subsidiaries to:

incur additional indebtedness;

issue additional securities;

create liens;

pay dividends or make distributions in respect of our capital stock or the capital stock of our subsidiaries;

redeem capital stock;

place restrictions on our subsidiaries' ability to pay dividends, make distributions or transfer assets;

make investments or other restricted payments;

sell or otherwise dispose of assets;

enter into sale-leaseback transactions;

engage in transactions with stockholders or affiliates;

issue or sell stock of our subsidiaries; or

effect a consolidation or merger;

whether the indenture will require us to maintain any interest coverage, fixed charge, cash flow-based, asset-based or other financial ratios;

Table of Contents

a discussion of certain material or special United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the debt securities;

information describing any book-entry features;

provisions for a sinking fund purchase or other analogous fund, if any;

the applicability of the provisions in the indenture on discharge;

whether the debt securities are to be offered at a price such that they will be deemed to be offered at an original issue discount as defined in paragraph (a) of Section 1273 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended;

the denominations in which we will issue the series of debt securities, if other than denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof;

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; and

any other specific terms, preferences, rights or limitations of, or restrictions on, the debt securities, including any additional events of default or covenants provided with respect to the debt securities, 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, our preferred stock or other securities (including securities of a third-party). We will include provisions as to 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, our preferred stock or other securities (including securities of a third-party) 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 indentures will not contain any covenant that restricts our ability to merge or consolidate, or sell, convey, transfer or otherwise dispose of all or substantially all of our assets. However, any successor to or acquirer of such assets must assume all of our obligations under the indentures or the debt securities, as appropriate. If the debt securities are convertible into or exchangeable for our other securities or securities of other entities, the person with whom we consolidate or merge or to whom we sell all of our property must make provisions for the conversion of the debt securities into securities that the holders of the debt securities would have received if they had converted the debt securities before the consolidation, merger or sale.

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 indentures with respect to any series of debt securities that we may issue:

if we fail to pay interest when due and payable and our failure continues for 90 days and the time for payment has not been extended;

if we fail to pay the principal, premium or sinking fund payment, if any, when due and payable at maturity, upon redemption or repurchase or otherwise, and the time for payment has not been extended;

if we fail to observe or perform any other covenant contained in the debt securities or the indentures, other than a covenant specifically relating to another series of debt securities, and our failure continues for 90 days after we receive notice from the trustee or we and the trustee receive notice from the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of the applicable series; and

Table of Contents

if specified events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization occur.

We will describe in each applicable prospectus supplement any additional events of default relating to the relevant series of debt securities.

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, 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 unpaid principal, premium, if any, 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 indentures, 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 or security satisfactory to it against any loss, liability or expense. 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.

The indentures provide that if an event of default has occurred and is continuing, the trustee will be required in the exercise of its powers to use the degree of care that a prudent person would use in the conduct of its own affairs. The trustee, however, may refuse to follow any direction that conflicts with law or the indenture, or that the trustee determines is unduly prejudicial to the rights of any other holder of the relevant series of debt securities, or that would involve the trustee in personal liability. Prior to taking any action under the indentures, the trustee will be entitled to indemnification against all costs, expenses and liabilities that would be incurred by taking or not taking such action.

A holder of the debt securities of any series will have the right to institute a proceeding under the indentures 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, and such holders have offered reasonable indemnity to the trustee or security satisfactory to it against any loss, liability or expense or to be incurred in compliance with instituting the proceeding as trustee; 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.

Table of Contents

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, or other defaults that may be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

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

The indentures provide that if a default occurs and is continuing and is actually known to a responsible officer of the trustee, the trustee must mail to each holder notice of the default within the earlier of 90 days after it occurs and 30 days after it is known by a responsible officer of the trustee or written notice of it is received by the trustee, unless such default has been cured or waived. Except in the case of a default in the payment of principal or premium of or interest on any debt security or certain other defaults specified in an indenture, the trustee shall be protected in withholding such notice if and so long as the board of directors, the executive committee or a trust committee of directors, or responsible officers of the trustee, in good faith determine that withholding notice is in the best interests of holders of the relevant series of debt securities.

Modification of Indenture; Waiver

Subject to the terms of the indenture for any series of debt securities that we may issue, we and the trustee may change an indenture without the consent of any holders with respect to the following specific matters:

to fix any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency in the indenture;

to comply with the provisions described above under Description of Debt Securities Consolidation, Merger or Sale ;

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

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 provide for the issuance of and establish the form and terms and conditions of the debt securities of any series as provided 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 hereunder by a successor trustee;

to provide for uncertificated debt securities and to make all appropriate changes for such purpose;

to add to our covenants such new covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions for the benefit of the holders, 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 to us in the indenture; or

to change anything that does not adversely affect the interests of any holder of debt securities of any series in any material respect.

In addition, under the indentures, 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, subject to the terms of the indenture for any series of debt securities that we may issue or otherwise provided in the prospectus supplement

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

applicable to a particular series of debt securities, we and the trustee may only make the following changes with the consent of each holder of any outstanding debt securities affected:

extending the stated maturity of the series of debt securities;

Table of Contents

reducing the principal amount, reducing the rate of or extending the time of payment of interest, or reducing any premium payable upon the redemption or repurchase 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, subject to the terms of the indenture and any limitation otherwise provided in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, 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:

register the transfer or exchange of debt securities of the series;

replace stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities of the series;

maintain paying agencies;

hold monies for payment in trust;

recover excess money held by the trustee;

compensate and indemnify the trustee; and

appoint any successor trustee.

In order to exercise our rights to be discharged, we must deposit with the trustee money or government obligations sufficient to pay all the principal of, any premium 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 otherwise specify in the applicable prospectus supplement, in denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof. The indentures provide 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 another depository named by us and identified in a prospectus supplement with respect to that series. See **Legal Ownership of Securities** below for a further description of the terms relating to any book-entry securities.

At the option of the holder, subject to the terms of the indentures 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 indentures 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 make no service charge for any registration of transfer or exchange, but we may require payment of any taxes or other governmental charges.

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

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.

Table of Contents

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 and is under no obligation to exercise any of the powers given it by the indentures 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. However, 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.

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 indentures 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 is applicable.

Ranking Debt Securities

The subordinated debt securities will be unsecured and will be subordinate and junior in priority of payment to certain of our other indebtedness to the extent described in a prospectus supplement. The subordinated indenture does not limit the amount of subordinated debt securities that we may issue. It also does not limit us from issuing any other secured or unsecured debt.

The senior debt securities will be unsecured and will rank equally in right of payment to all our other senior unsecured debt. The senior indenture does not limit the amount of senior debt securities that we may issue. It also does not limit us from issuing any other secured or unsecured debt.

Table of Contents

Existing Subordinated Debt

As of October 28, 2008, the Company had no existing subordinated debt.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

The following description, together with the additional information we may include in any applicable prospectus supplements and free writing prospectuses, 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 together with common stock, preferred stock or debt securities offered by any prospectus supplement, and may be attached to or separate from those securities. 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 that we may offer in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable free writing prospectus. The terms of any warrants offered under a prospectus supplement may differ from the terms described below. However, no prospectus supplement will fundamentally change the terms that are set forth in this prospectus or offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of its effectiveness.

We will issue the warrants under a warrant agreement that we will enter into with a warrant agent to be selected by us. The warrant agent will act solely as an agent of ours in connection with the warrants and will not act as an agent for the holders or beneficial owners of the warrants. We have filed forms of the warrant agreements and forms of warrant certificates containing the terms of the warrants being offered under this prospectus 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 a current report on Form 8-K that we file with the SEC, the form of warrant agreement, including a form of warrant certificate, that describes the terms of the particular series of warrants we are offering before the issuance of the related series of warrants. The following summaries of material provisions of the warrants and the warrant agreements are subject to, and qualified in their entirety by reference to, all the provisions of the warrant agreement and warrant certificate applicable to a particular series of warrants. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable free writing prospectus related to the particular series of warrants that we sell under this prospectus, as well as the complete warrant agreements and warrant certificates that contain the terms of the warrants.

General

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

the offering price and aggregate number of warrants offered;

the currency for which the warrants may be purchased;

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

if applicable, the date on and after which the warrants and the related securities will be separately transferable;

in the case of warrants to purchase debt securities, the principal amount of debt securities purchasable upon exercise of one warrant and the price at, and currency in which, this principal amount of debt securities may be purchased upon such exercise;

in the case of warrants to purchase common stock or preferred stock, the number of shares of common stock or preferred stock, as the case may be, purchasable upon the exercise of one warrant and the price at which these shares may be purchased upon such exercise;

the effect of any merger, consolidation, sale or other disposition of our business on the warrant agreements and the warrants;

the terms of any rights to redeem or call the warrants;

Table of Contents

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;

United States federal income tax consequences of holding or exercising the warrants;

the terms of the securities issuable upon exercise of the warrants; and

any other specific terms, preferences, rights or limitations of or restrictions on the warrants.

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

in the case of warrants to purchase debt securities, the right to receive payments of principal of, or premium, if any, or interest on, the debt securities purchasable upon exercise or to enforce covenants in the applicable indenture; or

in the case of warrants to purchase common stock or preferred stock, the right to receive dividends, if any, or, payments upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up or to exercise voting rights, if any.

Exercise of Warrants

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

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

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

Enforceability of Rights by Holders of Warrants

Each warrant agent will act solely as our agent under the applicable warrant agreement and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust with any holder of any warrant. A single bank or trust company may act as warrant agent for more than one issue of warrants. A warrant agent will have no duty or responsibility in case of any default by us under the applicable warrant agreement or warrant, including any duty or responsibility to initiate any proceedings at law or otherwise, or to make any demand upon us. Any holder of a warrant may, without the consent of the related warrant agent or the holder of any other warrant, enforce by appropriate legal action its right to exercise, and receive the securities purchasable upon exercise of, its warrants.

Table of Contents

Outstanding Warrants

As of October 28, 2008, there were no outstanding warrants to purchase shares of our common stock.

DESCRIPTION OF UNITS

The following description, together with the additional information we may include in any applicable prospectus supplements, summarizes the material terms and provisions of the units that we may offer under this prospectus. While the terms we have summarized below will apply generally to any units that we may offer under this prospectus, we will describe the particular terms of any series of units in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement. The terms of any units offered under a prospectus supplement may differ from the terms described below. However, no prospectus supplement will fundamentally change the terms that are set forth in this prospectus or offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of its effectiveness.

We will file as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from a current report on Form 8-K that we file with the SEC, the form of unit agreement that describes the terms of the series of units we are offering, and any supplemental agreements, before the issuance of the related series of units. The following summaries of material terms and provisions of the units are subject to, and qualified in their entirety by reference to, all the provisions of the unit agreement and any supplemental agreements applicable to a particular series of units. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplements related to the particular series of units that we sell under this prospectus, as well as the complete unit agreement and any supplemental agreements that contain the terms of the units.

General

We may issue units comprised of one or more debt securities, shares of common stock, shares of preferred stock and warrants in any combination. Each unit will be issued so that the holder of the unit is also the holder of each security included in the unit. Thus, the holder of a unit will have the rights and obligations of a holder of each included security. The unit agreement under which a unit is issued may provide that the securities included in the unit may not be held or transferred separately, at any time or at any time before a specified date.

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

the designation and terms of the units and of the securities comprising the units, including whether and under what circumstances those securities may be held or transferred separately;

any provisions of the governing unit agreement that differ from those described below; and

any provisions for the issuance, payment, settlement, transfer or exchange of the units or of the securities comprising the units.

The provisions described in this section, as well as those described under **Description of Capital Stock**, **Description of Debt Securities** and **Description of Warrants** will apply to each unit and to any common stock, preferred stock, debt security or warrant included in each unit, respectively.

Issuance in Series

We may issue units in such amounts and in numerous distinct series as we determine.

Enforceability of Rights by Holders of Units

Each unit agent will act solely as our agent under the applicable unit agreement and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust with any holder of any unit. A single bank or trust company may act as unit agent for more than one series of units. A unit agent will have no duty or responsibility in case of any default by us under the applicable unit agreement or unit, including any duty or responsibility to initiate any proceedings at law or otherwise, or to make any demand upon us. Any holder of a unit may, without the consent of the related unit agent or

the holder of any other unit, enforce by appropriate legal action its rights as holder under any security included in the unit.

Table of Contents

Title

We, the unit agents and any of their agents may treat the registered holder of any unit certificate as an absolute owner of the units evidenced by that certificate for any purpose and as the person entitled to exercise the rights attaching to the units so requested, despite any notice to the contrary. See Legal Ownership of Securities.

LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES

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

Book-Entry Holders

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

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

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

Street Name Holders

We may terminate a global security or issue securities that are not issued in 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 or any applicable trustee or depositary 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 or any such trustee or depositary 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 or third party 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 its 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 an indenture, or for other purposes. In such an event, we would seek approval only from the legal holders, and not the indirect holders, of the securities. Whether and how the holders contact the indirect holders is up to the legal holders.

Special Considerations for Indirect Holders

If you hold securities through a bank, broker or other financial institution, either in book-entry form because the securities are represented by one or more global securities or in street name, you should check with your own institution to find out:

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 issue to, 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, The Depository Trust Company, New York, New York, known as 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 **Special Situations When A Global Security Will Be Terminated**. As a result of these arrangements, the depository, or its nominee, will be the sole registered owner and legal 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 depository or with another institution that does. Thus, an investor whose security is represented by a global security will not be a legal 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 as a global security, 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

As an indirect holder, an investor's rights 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 as global securities, 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 the 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 the 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 the global security. We and the trustee also do not supervise the depository in any way;

the depository may, and we understand that DTC will, require that those who purchase and sell interests in the 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 the 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, a 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 names, so that they will be direct holders. We have described the rights of holders and street name investors above.

A global security will terminate when the following special situations occur:

if the depository notifies us that it is unwilling, unable or no longer qualified to continue as depository for that global security and we do not appoint another institution to act as depository 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 prospectus supplement. When a global security terminates, the depository, and neither we nor 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 to or through underwriters or dealers, through agents, or directly to one or more purchasers. 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 any underwriters, if any;

the purchase price of the securities and the proceeds 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 reallocated or paid to dealers; and

any securities exchange or market on which the securities may be listed.

Only underwriters named in the prospectus supplement are 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. Any public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers may change from time to time. We may use underwriters with whom we have a material relationship. We will describe in the prospectus supplement, naming the underwriter, the nature of any such relationship.

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

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

We may provide agents and underwriters with indemnification against civil liabilities related to this offering, 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 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.

Edgar Filing: CERUS CORP - Form 424B5

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. Short covering transactions involve purchases of the securities 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 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.

Table of Contents

Any underwriters who are qualified market makers on the Nasdaq Global Market may engage in passive market making transactions in the securities on the Nasdaq Global Market in accordance with Rule 103 of Regulation M, during the business day prior to the pricing of the offering, before the commencement of offers or sales of the securities. 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.

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 any applicable prospectus supplement.

LEGAL MATTERS

Cooley Godward Kronish, Palo Alto, California will pass for us upon the validity of the securities being offered by this prospectus and applicable prospectus supplement, and counsel named in the applicable prospectus supplement will pass upon legal matters for any underwriters, dealers or agents. As of the date of this prospectus, certain partners and associates of Cooley Godward Kronish LLP own an aggregate of 627 shares of our common stock, either individually or through investment partnerships.

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, 2007, and the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2007, 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 report, given on their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We are a reporting company and file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. We have filed with the SEC a registration statement on Form S-3 under the Securities Act with respect to the securities we are offering under this prospectus. This prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement and the exhibits to the registration statement. For further information with respect to us and the securities we are offering under this prospectus, we refer you to the registration statement and the exhibits and schedules filed as a part of the registration statement. You may read and copy the registration statement, as well as our reports, proxy statements and other information, at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. You can request copies of these documents by writing to the SEC and paying a fee for the copying cost. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for more information about the operation of the Public Reference Room. Our SEC filings are also available at the SEC's web site at <http://www.sec.gov>. We maintain a website at www.cerus.com. Information contained in or accessible through our website does not constitute a part of this prospectus.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference information that we file with it into this prospectus, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is an important 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 registration statement and prospectus the documents listed below, and any future filings we will make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of the initial registration statement but prior to effectiveness of the registration statement and after the date of this prospectus but prior to the termination of the offering of the securities covered by this prospectus (other than current reports or portions thereof furnished under Item 2.02 or Item 7.01 of Form 8-K):

Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2008;

Table of Contents

Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2008;

Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2008;

Our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2007;

Our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed March 3, 2008, June 6, 2008, June 11, 2008, and June 19, 2008;

Our definitive proxy statement filed pursuant to Section 14 of the Exchange Act in connection with our 2008 Annual Meeting of Stockholders filed with the SEC on April 25, 2008; and

The description of our common stock set forth in our registration statement on Form 8-A, filed with the SEC on January 8, 1997.

We will provide to each person, including any beneficial owner, to whom a prospectus is delivered, without charge upon written or oral request, a copy of any or all of the documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus but not delivered with the prospectus, including exhibits that are specifically incorporated by reference into such documents. Requests should be directed to: Cerus Corporation, Attention: Investor Relations, 2411 Stanwell Drive, Concord, California 94520, telephone: (925) 288-6000.

**DISCLOSURE OF COMMISSION POSITION ON INDEMNIFICATION FOR
SECURITIES ACT LIABILITY**

Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act may be permitted to directors, officers or persons controlling the registrant pursuant to the foregoing provisions, the registrant has been informed that in the opinion of the Securities and Exchange Commission such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and is, therefore, unenforceable.

Table of Contents

\$20,000,000

Common Stock

Prospectus Supplement

May , 2011