

Editorial

Financing good ideas

Introduction

To support life sciences and converging high-tech start-ups in today's challenging financial markets, the Swiss Biotech

Association organized this 1st Swiss Biotech Match Making Event as part of the Financial Platform managed by Swiss Biotech™

Start-ups are facing funding constraints and seek solutions to overcome liquidity gaps and various investor classes are lined up to support young entrepreneurs. However, matching needs with appropriate financing still remains an issue.

Nic Alexakis

Molecular Partners Receives EUROPEAN BIOTECHNICA AWARD 2015

Zurich, October 07, 2015. Molecular Partners AG (MOLN) announced today that it has been honored with the EUROPEAN BIOTECHNICA AWARD 2015. The award honors one company that has established a truly disruptive, pioneering technology in biotech or life sciences.

"We are very pleased that the renowned Biotechnica jury recognizes the potential of Molecular Partners' DARPin," said Christian Zahnd, Chief Executive Officer of Molecular Partners. "It makes us proud to be recognized for our endeavors to use our DARPin technology to generate products with the potential to significantly benefit patient's lives."

The Biotechnica Award 2015 recognized Molecular Partners' DARPin drug discovery platform and the advancements the company has made toward bringing novel therapeutic options to patients. In June 2015, Molecular Partners' development partner Allergan initiated two phase III registration trials of the company's lead molecule, abicipar, for the treatment of wet age-related macular degeneration. Molecular Partners also plans to present clinical interim data by the end of the year from a phase I study of MP0250, a multi-DARPin anti-cancer therapeutic that inhibits both VEGF and HGF from binding to their receptors, thereby blocking tumor growth and tumor spreading.

The award ceremony took place on October 6, during the BIOTECHNICA / LABVOLUTION reception event on the first day of the respective trade fair in Hannover, Germany. A selection of impressive companies from the United States, France, Switzerland and Germany competed for the award. An independent international jury of renowned experts chaired by Dr. Karsten Henco, CEO of HS Life Sciences GmbH in Düsseldorf, selected Molecular Partners AG as the winner.

"We would like to thank the entire Molecular Partners team for their dedication to advancing forward a pipeline of treatments for patients with severe diseases," said Patrick Amstutz, Chief Operating Officer of Molecular Partners. "The team's collaborative efforts empower the successful growth and development of our company."

Additional information on the EUROPEAN BIOTECHNICA AWARD 2015 as well as the BIOTECHNICA and LABVOLUTION 2015 trade shows can be found online at: www.biotechnica.de.



Nestlé and AC Immune in Dx deal

24.09.2015 - Nutrition company Nestlé is teaming up with biopharmaceutical company AC Immune SA to develop a Tau diagnostic assay for early Alzheimer's.



The Nestlé Institute of Health Sciences SA (NIHS), the Swiss concern's fundamental research institute, will provide its proprietary multiplexed antibody-based technology in order to develop an ultrasensitive, minimally invasive diagnostic able to detect Tau in human cerebrospinal fluid or blood plasma. The technology was developed by Nestlé subsidiary Prometheus Laboratories. The assay uses a triplex antibody microarray-based platform that measures the expression and activation of target proteins in tissues, blood or other fluids.

Lausanne-based AC Immune will provide its deep expertise in the biology and pathology of Tau proteins, which are known to be key markers for neurodegeneration, for example in Alzheimer's disease. AC Immune will also allocate its lab capabilities to the collaboration.

The two companies did not disclose any financial details. "The development of a minimally invasive diagnostic test to identify patients at very early stages is considered as one of the most pressing needs in Alzheimer's disease," Andrea Pfeifer, CEO of AC Immune. "Early diagnosis of this critical global health problem is equally needed for the development of pharmaceutical as well as nutritional approaches."

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Sofinnova invests in Asceneuron

29.09.2015 - Swiss CNS specialist Asceneuron SA has raised CHF30m (€27.5m) in a Series A financing, winning Paris-based Sofinnova Partners as its largest investor.

SOFINNOVAVENTURES

ASCENEURON
A Neurodegeneration Therapeutics Company

In addition to the company's founding investors MS Ventures – the biopharma venture arm of German Merck KGaA –, new investors SR One, Kurma Partners and Johnson & Johnson Innovation have also come onboard.

Lausanne-based Asceneuron was created in 2012 as part of the Entrepreneur Partnership Program, implemented by MS Ventures to support the creation of spin-off companies from Merck Serono. The founders, Dirk Beher and Christoph Wiessner, are still leading the company in the roles of CEO and COO, respectively. They will use the money raised to support the development of the company's orally bioavailable O-GlcNAcase inhibitor ASN-561 with the hope to finalise the pivotal proof-of concept trial. ASN-561 has the potential to become the first oral treatment for tauopathies, a group of neurodegenerative diseases, which includes several orphan conditions.

As a result of the investments, Sofinnova partner Henrijette Richter, Deborah Harland of SR One, Vanessa Malier of Kurma Partners and Hakan Goker of MS Ventures have joined the Company's Board of Directors along with a representative of J&J.

"We believe Asceneuron's innovative approach based on a small molecule inhibitor has the potential to radically transform the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, one of the largest healthcare problems of this century, and provide patients with solutions that will address disease progression," said Richter. Asceneuron CEO Beher added: "The company is now in a position to progress development of ASN-561 to the clinic whilst expanding our emerging pipeline. We are looking forward to working with the new members of our Board of Directors to create a leading company in the field of Neurodegeneration."

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The Directory 2015/2016 is now in distribution. Beyond core biotechnology, the directory includes industry members involved on the supply ranging from technology providers, suppliers of equipment and services to contract research, bioinformatics, consulting and finance companies.



L'extension du BioArk de Monthey est une réalité

LeNouvelliste, 30.09.2015

ECONOMIE - L'extension du BioArk de Monthey a été inaugurée ce matin. Près de 22 millions de francs ont été investis. A terme, quelque 70 emplois supplémentaires devraient voir le jour.

Centre de développement des sciences de la vie à Monthey, le BioArk s'agrandit. Créé sur une surface de 2500 m² en 2004, il en compte désormais 6500. A terme, cela devrait permettre d'accueillir huit entreprises supplémentaires, principalement des start-up dans le monde des sciences de la vie.

Un étage complet de la nouvelle structure a été dévolu à l'école intercantonale de laborantins en chimie, une structure unique en Valais.

Coût des travaux qui se sont déroulés entre février 2013 et juin 2015: quelque 22 millions de francs. Une somme à 40% à la charge de l'Etat du Valais et à 60% de BioArk SA, qui a notamment dû emprunter 11,6 millions de francs.

Par Fabrice Zwahlen

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