

News Release



## **Exotect Awarded a National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Grant to Fight Mucus Hypersecretion in Pathological Lung Diseases**

**HOUSTON, September 18, 2017** – The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) awarded Exotect, LLC, a Fannin Innovation Studio company, a \$224,576 STTR grant to further the development of novel therapeutics for the treatment of pathological conditions affected by airway mucus hypersecretion. These pathological conditions include chronic bronchitis, cystic fibrosis, bronchiectasis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma.

Exotect is a Houston-based preclinical pharmaceutical company that is developing small molecule therapeutics targeting Syt2, a protein critical for the stimulated release of mucin from the airway epithelial cells. In partnership with the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, the grant will be used by Exotect to generate derivatives of the company's current promising candidates and test for improved solubility, target affinity, pharmacodynamics, and toxicity with the ultimate goal of selecting a potential molecule for clinical development.

The concept for Exotect's program is based on research from Dr. Burton Dickey, Professor and Chair of the Department of Pulmonary Medicine at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Collaborators include Dr. Michael Tuvim, Ph.D., Professor and Director of Laboratory Research, and Dr. Roberto Adachi, MD, Associate Professor. Dickey, Tuvim and Adachi will continue to remain engaged in the development of the therapeutic technology with Exotect.

“The goal of our program is to identify drugs that prevent rapid mucin secretion that can block airways, while preserving baseline secretion that is required to keep airways clear” says Dickey. “We were surprised to find that genetic modulation of Syt2 had such a profound effect on stimulated mucus secretion and are excited to develop small molecule inhibitors that target this protein.”

Exotect is one of the portfolio companies started at Fannin Innovation Studio, a Houston-based company focused on commercializing innovation developed in the Texas Medical Center

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institutions. Exotect's research and development activities are actively managed by Fannin principals Melissa Singh, PhD and Dev Chatterjee, MD, PhD. Managing partner Atul Varadhachary, MD, PhD serves as President of Exotect.

"We are excited by our discovery that small molecules targeting Syt2 may inhibit stimulated mucin release in the airway," said Varadhachary. "Our strong partnership with MD Anderson and approach to drug discovery and development are key to making this project a success."

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**About Fannin Innovation Studio**

Houston-based Fannin Innovation Studio is an early-stage life sciences development group focused exclusively on commercializing medical technologies. Fannin partners with life science innovators to co-found startup companies and provides a pooled management team, funding, and administrative support. To further bridge the commercialization gap, Fannin's internship and fellowship programs provide aspiring entrepreneurs with hands-on development experience with its portfolio companies. For more information, visit [www.FanninInnovation.com](http://www.FanninInnovation.com) or email [innovate@fannininnovation.com](mailto:innovate@fannininnovation.com).

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