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News Release

rHDL Therapeutics Awarded a $324,593 NIH Grant to Advance Cancer Therapy Research

Biotechnology project receives award to develop lipid-based nanoparticle as platform siRNA delivery vehicle for cancer therapy

HOUSTON, September 28, 2017 – The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) of the National Institute of Health (NIH) has awarded Fannin Innovation Studio's rHDL Therapeutics project a $324,593 grant to develop reconstituted high-density lipoprotein (rHDL) particles as a platform siRNA delivery vehicle for cancer therapy.

rHDL Therapeutics is a preclinical biotechnology project developing targeted therapeutics for cancer and liver disease. In partnership with The University of North Texas Health Science Center and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, the NIH grant will be used by Fannin to evaluate key pharmacologic and safety parameters regarding the nanoparticle formulations. rHDL particles comprise the same natural components as endogenous high-density lipoproteins (HDLs), which our bodies typically use to shuttle cholesterol to the liver for excretion. rHDL Therapeutics has repurposed HDLs to package and deliver various therapeutic small molecule and nucleic acid-based drugs—instead of cholesterol—to diseased tissues. rHDL represents a promising platform for targeted drug delivery since it is biocompatible, has an excellent safety profile in humans, and specifically targets a receptor over-expressed in many cancer types. rHDL is also being evaluated in other therapeutic settings, including Classic Galactosemia and Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH).

"We are excited to advance the rHDL drug delivery platform along the clinical development pathway toward eventual commercialization," states Fannin Innovation Studio Entrepreneurship Fellow Michelle Ho, Ph.D. "With millions of patients suffering from cancer, we aim to create a more effective alternative therapy to current approaches. This grant will enable us to achieve significant pre-clinical milestones as we continue to evaluate the nanoparticle's safety and efficacy in animal models."

siRNA-containing rHDL particles were developed by Andras Lacko, Ph.D., Professor in Molecular Biology & Immunology at The University of North Texas Health Science Center, and Anil Sood, M.D., Professor and Vice Chair for Translational Research in the Departments of Gynecologic Oncology and Cancer Biology and co-director of the Center for RNA Interference and Non-Coding RNA at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

"We have been working on our robust siRNA delivery system to enhance the therapeutics for ovarian cancer with Dr. Anil Sood of MD Anderson Cancer Center for several years," says Lacko. "Even though we obtained an approved patent on this technology and substantial grant support, its progress toward clinical application encountered numerous challenges. In the last year, the participation of Fannin Innovation Studio markedly accelerated the translational activity of this siRNA delivery project. Fannin has obtained financial support from the NIH and initiated a vigorous promotional campaign that substantially enhanced the pace of development of this exciting technology. We look forward to continued interaction with Fannin to achieve the translation of this technology to the bedside."

"The rHDL technology allows us to circumvent critical barriers encountered in traditional small molecule drug delivery. By targeting cancer cells and delivering therapeutic siRNA directly to the cytosol of cells, we can more effectively tune gene regulation to stop tumor progression and promote apoptosis," says Sood.

rHDL Therapeutics is a portfolio project of Fannin Innovation Studio, a Houston-based company that provides integrated funding and management of early-stage life science startups. rHDL's research and development activities are actively managed by Fannin fellow Michelle Ho, Ph.D. and Fannin principal Dev Chatterjee, M.D., Ph.D. Managing partner Atul Varadhachary, M.D., Ph.D. serves as project president.

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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 or email innovate@fannininnovation.com.

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