

# BIO WORLD<sup>®</sup> TODAY

WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER 1, 2008

THE DAILY BIOTECHNOLOGY NEWSPAPER

VOLUME 19, No. 191  
SPECIAL REPRINT

## Link Completes \$40M Round to Fund Neurology Programs

By Catherine Hollingsworth  
Staff Writer

Link Medicine Corp. said that it has obtained \$40 million of Series C equity financing to help move its lead pre-clinical programs into human clinical testing.

The Cambridge, Mass.-based company is not disclosing details of the clinical development since it is planning a number of manuscript submissions to scientific journals in the coming months, CEO Adam Rosenberg said.

The company is in discussions with potential partners as it looks ahead to later stage trials, which can be "long and complicated" in the area of neurodegenerative diseases, Rosenberg said.

Founded in March 2005, Link is focused on developing the first disease-modifying therapies for the treatment of several neurodegenerative diseases – including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. The company is pursuing new approaches to target a common feature of those disorders – the buildup in nerve cells of incorrectly folded, aggregated and ultimately neurotoxic proteins.

The company has raised \$56.5 million to date, including the latest round of \$40 million. The current round was funded by biotechnology investors, Clarus Ventures and SV Life Sciences. The venture fund of Biogen Idec, which has expressed interest in the area of neurodegenerative diseases, also participated in this round, Rosenberg said.

Nick Galakatos, managing director of Clarus Ventures, told *BioWorld Today* that one of the things his firm found attractive about Link is the company's "breadth of approach" to neurodegenerative diseases.

Link's approach, he said, reaches across multiple diseases, giving it a "very exciting advantage" over, for example, Alzheimer's drugs in the pipeline that target toxic amyloid and are directed only at that particular disease.

Myriad Genetics Inc.'s failed Flurizan and other Alzheimer's drugs like it that target toxic amyloid in the brain have shown lackluster results. Myriad has discontinued all development of Flurizan, and shifted its focus to cancer and infectious diseases (See *BioWorld Today*, Aug. 21, 2008).

A recent Phase II trial of Elan Corp. plc's bapineuzumab (AAB-001) showed that the drug only worked in certain patients with Alzheimer's disease while other patients developed a potentially dangerous brain-swelling condition. Last year, Neurochem Inc.'s Alzhemed also failed in a Phase III trial. (See *BioWorld Today*, Aug. 28, 2007, and July 31, 2008.)

Although there have been some "setbacks" with certain Alzheimer's drug candidates, Galakatos said, "I don't think that by any means these represent . . . blows to that area at all. It is a very active area, and it will continue to be an active area." He pointed to the interest of the pharmaceutical industry in Alzheimer's drugs targeting amyloid, including CoMentis Inc., which is testing a beta secretase inhibitor for Alzheimer's.

In May, CoMentis entered a \$760 million deal with Japan's Astellas Pharma Inc. to develop a compound for Alzheimer's disease.

In a more recent deal, Pfizer Inc. paid \$225 million up front to Medivation Inc. in a deal to co-develop and market Dimebon, the biotech company's experimental drug for Alzheimer's and Huntington's disease. Dimebon (dimebolin) is believed to work by improving mitochondrial function that is impaired in Alzheimer's disease. (See *BioWorld Today*, July 31, 2008, and Sept. 4, 2008.)

Link's approach could be complementary to drugs that target amyloid, or its platform could be used to develop a standalone drug, Galakatos said.

He also said that Clarus believed strongly in the work of Chief Scientific Officer Peter T. Lansbury Jr., the company's founder and a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School. Lansbury is a leader in the scientific understanding of protein misfolding and aggregation in neurodegeneration, according to Link.

Michael Ross, managing partner of SV Life Sciences, said in a statement that Link's platform also could apply to "a wide range of orphan indications where protein misfolding and aggregation play a critical role," as well as more prevalent conditions like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. ■

©2009. Reprinted With Permission From BioWorld<sup>®</sup> Today, Atlanta, Georgia.