

Neurexis Therapeutics Works to Solve an Unmet Healthcare Need



Neurexis is located at Fitzsimons Innovation Community in Bioscience 1.

Neurexis Therapeutics relies on innovation to address a substantial unmet medical need: damage to the brain resulting from loss of blood flow during stroke, cardiac arrest, and other events. The company's goal is to advance a neuroprotective drug that prevents impairment and improves patients' lives. Less than a year since forming, Neurexis is propelling forward with progress.

CBSA President & CEO, Jennifer Jones Paton, asked Michael Artinger, Ph.D., Neurexis' Chief Executive Officer, CBSA's Key Questions for Life Sciences Innovators.

Q: Tell us about your company or organization.

A: Neurexis Therapeutics was created in early 2020 by VIC Technology Venture Development to address the substantial unmet medical need of damage resulting from inadequate oxygen during stroke and cardiac arrest. Dr. Ulli Bayer, a Professor in the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Colorado Medical School, has created tatCN19o, an optimized peptide (a small protein) with demonstrated efficacy and safety in small and large animal models of global cerebral ischemia. In addition to grants from the NIH and the American Heart Association, Dr. Bayer has received funding from the state and others to generate an extensive data package for tatCN19o. VIC invested in this technology as a result of the continuum of funding from federal, university and state sources.

Q: Describe your team culture. How does your culture shape what your company or organization produces or offers?

A: We are a small, nimble team of experts with very effective operations. As Neurexis matures, we will add new talent required to get a much-needed medicine out into the world as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. For our team, we all have a common goal: finding the cure. A significant advantage of being a member of the VIC startup ecosystem is the shared back office

support the firm provides across its portfolio, including accounting, human resources, marketing and communications, grant management, and more.

Q: What are you working on right now?

A: The inventor of the technology, Dr. Ulli Bayer, established proof-of-concept data for the lead peptide in global cerebral ischemia caused by cardiac arrest, making the asset ready for IND-enabling studies, including pharmacokinetics and toxicology analyses. Next, we'll be using a combination of resources at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, contract research, and contract manufacturing organizations to continue to move towards clinical studies in patients. To this end, an investigator-initiated pre-IND meeting will be requested early next year.

"Our work will greatly improve the quality of life of patients and reduce the burden on healthcare systems."

Q: How will your work save or change lives?

A: Stroke is a leading cause of serious long-term disability and reduces mobility in more than half of stroke survivors ages 65 and over. An FDA-approved neuroprotective peptide administered intravenously shortly after the ischemic event as standard of care will greatly improve the quality of life of patients and reduce the burden on domestic and international healthcare systems.

Q: How has COVID-19 impacted your company or organization?

A: Neurexis was formed in February of 2020 just as the global pandemic was emerging. The primary effect on our organization was a delay in completing the initial round of funding, which is now in place. Our dispersed virtual model meant that we were already using Zoom for our team meetings during the initial and subsequent rounds of shutdowns.

On a side note, the increased incidence of ischemic stroke in otherwise healthy COVID-19 patients is a phenomenon that Neurexis will be investigating.

Q: CBSA champions a collaborative life sciences ecosystem because we are #stongertogether. How has being an active participant in our life sciences community supported your success?

A: The support for startups provided by CBSA has been essential. When the Colorado's Advanced Industry Accelerator Grant Program was at risk earlier this year, the efforts of CBSA and the broader community were key to saving it. The ability to supplement private investment with local, state, regional and federal sources is a significant advantage and instrumental in being a part of the Colorado life sciences community.

Neurexis draws inspiration from the collaborative community at Fitzsimons Innovation Community.

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"For our team, we all have a common goal: finding the cure."