

## **University of Bern NCCR TransCure Spin-off Raises CHF 20 Million in Series A Financing**

- **Novel approach to developing safe and effective therapies for unmet needs in neuropsychiatric disorders based on technology designed and developed at the University of Bern**
- **The University of Bern spin-off company Synendos Therapeutics will complete pre-clinical development and progress lead candidate through proof of concept clinical study**

**Bern, Switzerland – 12. November 2020** – Synendos Therapeutics (Synendos), a University of Bern NCCR TransCure spin-off biopharmaceutical company announces it has raised CHF 20 million in a Series A financing. Synendos is developing a new class of small molecules aimed at restoring the natural functioning of the endocannabinoid system in the brain with the potential for treating a wide range of Central Nervous System (CNS) disorders. Synendos' newly developed selective endocannabinoid reuptake inhibitors (SERIs) act by increasing the levels of endogenous cannabinoids in a self-limiting mode of action, representing an innovative and potentially safer therapeutic approach to CNS disorders associated with anxiety, mood and stress-related disorders.

Incorporated in April 2019, Synendos Therapeutics was spun out of the University of Bern and the research network NCCR TransCure. The research team of Professor Jürg Gertsch is dedicated to drug discovery in the endocannabinoid system. The novel technology stems from research on endocannabinoid biology and pharmacology carried out at the university and led by co-founders, Professor Jürg Gertsch and Dr Andrea Chicca.

**Prof. Jürg Gertsch, NCCR TransCure PI and co-founder of Synendos Therapeutics, commented:** “After more than 10 years of research by my team on endocannabinoids and CNS disorders at the Institute of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine (IBMM), it is exciting to see our academic drug discovery project going one step further. We believe that our novel technology has the potential to become a new therapeutic option for a wide range of CNS disorders. Our goal is to translate years of academic research in the lab into the development of SERIs for human medicine. This series A financing round enables Synendos to complete preclinical studies and advance the lead drug candidate through safety and proof of concept studies in a relevant and well-defined disease indication, as part of early/initial clinical trials. It has been an exciting journey to develop the first selective endocannabinoid reuptake inhibitors and discover their biological target. Many people in my lab and the NCCR TransCure network (Prof. Karl-Heinz Altmann ETHZ, Prof. Jean-Louis Reymond, UniBe) were involved in this directly or indirectly and contributed to reach this important milestone. We are thankful to different agencies for financially supporting initial translation, including Roche Pharma, Innosuisse, Venture Kick, Swiss Multiple Sclerosis Society, Baselaunch and Gebert RUF Stiftung. Synendos Therapeutics is led by my former postdoc and NCCR TransCure researcher Dr. Andrea Chicca. Together with the founding team he has raised CHF 20 million in a Series A financing co-led by Kurma Partners and Sunstone Life Science Ventures and participation from BERNINA Bio Invest, among others.

**Dr. Andrea Chicca, co-founder and CEO of Synendos Therapeutics, commented:**

There are considerable neuropsychiatric complications and comorbidities associated with CNS disorders and, in today's world, an increasing prevalence of anxiety-related conditions. Despite this, it has been 25 years since a new drug was approved for the treatment of neuropsychiatric disorders. This highlights the urgent need for new safe and effective treatments in this area and underpins Synendos' mission to focus on the development of a novel drug technology to help combat anxiety, mood and stress-related disorders. We are very pleased to have attracted such a strong syndicate of world-class

investors. In the validation of our science, they bring much more than just financing and will enable us to work towards reaching a clinical inflection point with an efficient and clearly-defined path.”

**NCCR postdoc and endocannabinoid researcher Dr. Ines Reynoso-Moreno said:**

I am very pleased and grateful of having been part of the characterization of the selective endocannabinoid reuptake inhibitors (SERIs) for the last years, which are now being further developed by Synendos Therapeutics. For my advanced postdoctoral research, I decided to focus on the characterization of SERIs in more complex animal models related to anxiety and stress disorders and I am also involved in the biological characterization of their target. Within the NCCR TransCure, we have worked exhaustibly, combining in vitro and in vivo models with bio-analytics, to bring the best of this class of molecules forward. The combination of basic research with drug discovery and translation is an exciting career path and it has help me to meet professionals from many different disciplines.

**NCCR TransCure Deputy director Prof. Jean Louis Reymond, said:**

Our NCCR TransCure network’s main aim was to bring physiologists, structural biologists and chemists to think and work together on unsolved problems in the area of membrane transport. We are very proud that Prof. Jürg Gertsch and his team made use of this constellation to take on a high-risk but visionary project on endocannabinoid transport biology. Our collaboration within the NCCR led to the discovery of SERIs and enabled the founding of Synendos to translate basic research to the clinic.

**Notes to Editors:**

**About Synendos Therapeutics**

Synendos Therapeutics is a biopharmaceutical company developing a new class of small molecules aimed at restoring the natural functioning of the endocannabinoid system in the brain with the potential for treating a wide range of Central Nervous System (CNS) disorders. Incorporated in April 2019, Synendos Therapeutics was spun out of the University of Bern and the drug discovery consortium, NCCR TransCure. The company’s novel technology stems from 10 years of solid research on endocannabinoid biology and pharmacology carried out at the University of Bern by co-founders, Professor Jürg Gertsch and Dr Andrea Chicca, and centres around the development of selective endocannabinoid reuptake inhibitors (SERIs). SERIs act by increasing the levels of endogenous cannabinoids in a self-limiting mode of action, representing an innovative and potentially safer therapeutic approach to CNS disorders, associated with anxiety, mood and stress-related disorders, than is currently available. [www.synendos.com](http://www.synendos.com)

**About SERIs**

SERIs are first-in-class endocannabinoid system modulators that mildly and selectively increase endogenous cannabinoids levels by inhibiting a newly identified drug target. SERIs act with a self-limiting mechanism of action that enables a fine-tuned modulation of synaptic transmission in major neuronal circuits in the CNS. The new mode of action of SERIs represents an innovative and potentially safer therapeutic approach to CNS disorders associated with anxiety, mood.