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Xention awarded £1.4m from Technology Strategy Board to develop new medicines for atrial fibrillation

The Technology Strategy Board, the UK's innovation agency, will co-fund the preclinical development of Xention's novel inhibitors of the cardiac potassium channel, IKACh

CAMBRIDGE, UK – XENTION LTD ("Xention"), the Cambridge-based biopharmaceutical company specialising in the discovery and development of ion channel-modulating drugs, announced today that it had secured £1.4m co-funding from the Technology Strategy Board, the UK's innovation agency, to progress its novel IKACh channel blockers through pre-clinical development.

Xention is developing a pipeline of innovative products for the treatment of atrial fibrillation (AF), an indication for which there is high unmet medical need, by targeting key ion channels, and IKACh represents an exciting new target for the treatment of AF, inhibition of which is expected to halt and prevent the recurrence of AF. Using its proprietary platform, Xention has identified a series of potent and selective modulators of IKACh, which also appear differentiated from other IKACh inhibitors in their activity on human atrial tissue from AF patients. The company is now well positioned to advance candidate drugs in its pipeline towards the clinic.

The Biomedical Catalyst funding award, made by the Technology Strategy Board, will support the characterisation of a selection of Xention's advanced IKACh inhibitors and the progression of one compound through a full preclinical development programme, while at the same time undertaking all manufacturing activities required for subsequent clinical development. If successful, the co-funded research will lead to the clinical evaluation of a potential breakthrough therapy for patients with AF.

In addition to its IKACh programme, Xention and Servier Laboratories are conducting clinical studies of XEN-D0103, a modulator of IKur (Kv1.5), another cardiac potassium channel thought to be important in AF. Xention recently granted an option to Servier to develop and commercialise XEN-D0103 in all territories except the US and Japan.

Tim Brears, CEO of Xention said: "We are delighted to have succeeded in this competitive process and that the Technology Strategy Board has recognized not only the quality of our programme but also the promise IKACh represents as a new target for AF alongside IKur, both of which are key atrial-selective cardiac ion channels".

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Notes to Editors

About Xention Ltd:

Xention is a leader in the discovery and development of ion channel-modulating drugs. The Company is developing a pipeline of innovative products for the treatment of atrial fibrillation, an indication for which there is high unmet medical need, by targeting key ion channels. Xention uses an innovative approach to discover and design potent and selective small-molecule drugs and has collaborations with several companies. In atrial fibrillation, the company is developing modulators of IKur (Kv1.5) and IKACh, both recognised as novel, highly exciting new targets for the disease. Its IKur (Kv1.5) programme is the subject of a partnership with Servier for all territories except the US and Japan. For further information, please see http://www.xention.com.

About atrial fibrillation

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is the most common sustained cardiac rhythm disturbance, occurring in between 1 and 2 per cent of the general population but increasing rapidly with age. It is estimated that over six million Europeans suffer from this arrhythmia and its prevalence is calculated to increase by at least 2.5 fold in the next 50 years as the population ages. AF confers a five-fold increased risk of stroke and one in five of all strokes are attributable to AF. The ischemic strokes seen in association with the arrhythmia are often fatal, and those that survive are often left crippled by their stroke and likely to suffer recurrent strokes. Around one per cent of the healthcare budget of Western European and North American countries is spent on the management of AF.

Thus this disease presents a rapidly growing social, medical and public health problem in need of urgent solution.

About IKACh:

IKACh is the acetylcholine-activated inward-rectifier potassium current. It is functionally important in the atria of the human heart, but not the ventricles. Activation of IKACh shortens the atrial action potential and effective refractory period, and stabilizes the resting membrane potential of the atria. In patients with atrial fibrillation, IKACh activity is increased in the atria and this abnormally activity can contribute to the induction and maintenance of AF. Inhibiting IKACh is expected to provide a more targeted and safer therapy, devoid of the liabilities associated with the current, clinically-used anti-arrhythmic drugs for AF.

About the Technology Strategy Board:

The Technology Strategy Board is the UK's innovation agency. Its goal is to accelerate economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation. Sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Technology Strategy Board brings together business, research and the public sector, supporting and accelerating the development of innovative products and services to meet market needs, tackle major societal challenges and help build the future economy. For more information please visit www.innovateuk.org.

About Catalysts:

Catalysts are run jointly by the Technology Strategy Board and the Research Councils. A Catalyst is a form of research and development funding which focuses on a specific priority area and aims to help take projects from research to as close to commercial viability as possible. The Catalyst model supports projects in priority areas where the UK research base has a leading position and where there is clear commercial potential. Current Catalysts include: Biomedical Catalyst, Agri-tech Catalyst and the Industrial Biotechnology Catalyst. For more details please visit https://www.innovate.org/-/catalysts.

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