Arvinas Announces Strategic R&D Collaboration with Merck to Study Novel Protein Degradation Technology

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Multi-year collaboration will focus on multiple disease targets across several therapeutic areas

NEW HAVEN, Conn., April 7, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Arvinas LLC, a private biotechnology company creating a new class of drugs based on protein degradation, announced a strategic collaboration with Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, in which Arvinas' novel PROTAC technology will be used to degrade target proteins, with the goal of creating novel therapeutics. The multi-year collaboration will encompass multiple disease targets across several therapeutic areas.

While the specifics of the financial arrangements were not disclosed, Arvinas will receive an up-front payment and funding to support Merck-related research. Additionally, Arvinas could earn up to $434 million if all research, development, regulatory and commercial milestone payments are successfully paid for products against all the targets initially selected by Merck, as well as tiered royalties.

Merck may, at its discretion, elect to expand the collaboration to include additional disease targets. This decision would trigger an additional one-time payment, as well as payment of milestones and royalties on a product-by-product basis.

"We look forward to working with Merck to create novel drugs to address difficult targets, and we believe this alliance will maximize the value of Arvinas' very exciting and innovative protein degradation technology," said Manuel Litchman, M.D., President and CEO of Arvinas.

PROTACs, or proteolysis-targeting chimeras, are bifunctional small molecules that target proteins for degradation and removal from a cell. These molecules induce a cell's own quality control machinery to bind to a particular protein and "label" it for degradation, thus removing a protein from the system. This contrasts to a more traditional drug development approach that inhibits proteins. However, only 25 percent of the body's 20,000 proteins can be drugged via traditional methods. Proteins that cannot be drugged via traditional methods can potentially be degraded using Arvinas' approach, radically expanding the number of disease-causing proteins that can become the targets of new drugs.

About Arvinas

Arvinas is a pharmaceutical company focused on developing new small molecule strategies aimed at degrading disease-causing cellular proteins. We are translating these innovative protein degradation approaches into novel drugs for the treatment of cancer and other diseases. Many diseases are a result of "rogue," uncontrolled proteins, whose absence could bring great clinical benefit to patients. To address these pathological intracellular proteins, Arvinas is developing a new drug paradigm based on the elimination of these proteins. Our innovative protein degradation technology uses small molecule drugs to "tag" specific proteins to be degraded by the ubiquitin/proteasome system (UPS), which is responsible for the normal turnover of most proteins within the cell.

Based on groundbreaking research conducted at Yale University by our Founder and Chief Scientific Advisor, Craig Crews, Ph.D., Arvinas has developed a platform technology to induce the loss of intracellular proteins: Proteolysis-Targeting Chimera (PROTAC). The ability of PROTAC-based drugs to induce protein degradation (instead of protein inhibition) offers the advantage of potentially targeting "undruggable" as well as "druggable" elements of the proteome. This greatly expands our ability to create drugs for many new, previously unapproachable targets. For more information, visit www.arvinas.com.

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