



Confo Therapeutics Announces Exclusive, Worldwide License Agreement with VIB for Powerful Novel Structure Determination Technology

Licence provides Confo Therapeutics with exclusive access to 'Megabody' Technology for High Resolution Cryo-Electron Microscopy evaluation of G-Protein Coupled Receptors, strengthening its drug discovery engine

- **Confo Therapeutics secures exclusive, worldwide license to new proprietary Megabody technology for GPCRs**
- **Megabody scaffold extends the utility of Confo® bodies to cryo-EM, without affecting their conformation selectivity**
- **Two Megabody publications in this week's issue of *Nature* reveal unprecedented high-resolution structure of the GABA_A receptor** ^{1,2}

Ghent, Belgium, 3 January 2019 – Confo Therapeutics, an emerging drug discovery company, today announces that it has entered into an agreement with VIB, a life sciences research institute in Flanders, Belgium, for an exclusive, worldwide license to VIB's 'Megabody' technology.

Megabodies are novel antigen-binding chimeric proteins which are ideally suited for three-dimensional structural analysis of proteins via high-resolution cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM).

The Megabody technology enabled an international team of scientists, including Confo Therapeutics' founder, Prof Jan Steyaert of the VIB-VUB Center for Structural Biology, to produce high resolution cryo-EM structures of the native human GABA_A receptor in complex with common drugs for the first time – published in this week's *Nature*, see full references below. ^{1,2}

Under the license agreement, Confo Therapeutics will apply the Megabody technology to its proprietary Confo® bodies to further improve their use in 3D structure determination of G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs). The Megabody scaffold adds more mass and structural features to Confobodies, while retaining their ability to stabilize GPCRs in the particular conformation of interest for drug discovery.

Commenting on the deal, Dr Cedric Ververken, Confo Therapeutics' CEO, said: "The Megabody technology will be a valuable addition to our Confo technology and gives us an outstanding toolbox for GPCR structure-based drug discovery. We congratulate Jan for the success of this novel technology and are grateful to VIB for entrusting its use to Confo Therapeutics."

Dr Christel Menet, CSO, added: "We were impressed by the high-resolution cryo-EM structures of the GABA_A receptor presented by our scientific advisor Dr Radu Aricescu (MRC-LMB, Cambridge, UK) in collaboration with Dr Jan Steyaert (VIB-VUB) in the recent *Nature* publications. The unprecedented quality of the cryo-EM structure of the GABA_A receptor, made possible by using the Megabody technology, revealed the receptor in its proper pentameric conformation for the first time, while also providing new information on the binding sites and mode of action of high value

drugs including alprazolam (Xanax) and diazepam (Valium). We look forward to deploying this same technique to our GPCRs to accelerate our drug discovery process.”

Prof Jan Steyaert, commented, “Our Megabody technology enables cryo-EM studies on targets that were intractable through other methods, and it has also been validated as a next generation crystallization chaperone for visualizing 3D structures of drug targets for structure-based design. This licensing agreement will allow Confo Therapeutics to further strengthen its work on GPCRs, and will boost its drug discovery engine.”

- End -

Nature Publication References:

¹ Simonas Masiulis, Rooma Desai, Tomasz Uchanski, Itziar Serna Martin, Duncan Lavery, Dimple Karia, Tomas Malinauskas, Jasenko Zivanov, Els Pardon, Abhay Kotecha, Jan Steyaert, Keith W. Miller & A. Radu Aricescu, GABAA receptor signalling mechanisms revealed by structural pharmacology, *Nature* 2019, Advance online publication date: 2nd January 2019 (DOI: 10.1038/s41586-018-0832-5)

² Duncan Lavery, Rooma Desai, Tomasz Uchanski, Simonas Masiulis, Wojciech J. Stec, Tomas Malinauskas, Jasenko Zivanov, Els Pardon, Jan Steyaert, Keith W. Miller & A. Radu Aricescu, Cryo-EM structure of the human a1b3g2 GABAA receptor in a lipid bilayer, *Nature* 2019, Advance online publication date: 2nd January 2019 (DOI: 10.138/s41586-018-0833-4)

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About Confo Therapeutics

Confo Therapeutics is a VUB-VIB spin-off co-founded in 2015 by VIB and Capricorn Venture Partners with the support of MINTS, PMV, QBIC and V-Bio Ventures. The Company is building a portfolio of first-in-class programs based on its proprietary Confo® technology which makes use of antibody fragments or “Confobodies” to stabilize G-protein coupled receptors (GPCRs) in a particular conformation of interest as a superior starting point for drug discovery.

GPCRs are attractive drug targets in the treatment of many different conditions, playing an essential part in numerous life processes and influencing diseases.

In addition to developing its own pipeline, Confo Therapeutics is entering into revenue-generating drug discovery partnerships with select pharma companies, on GPCR targets which do not compete with its internal projects. The Company has ongoing collaborations with Lundbeck and Roche.

More info: www.confotherapeutics.com