

**New biotech company Confo Therapeutics launched by VIB and Vrije Universiteit Brussel:
Capricorn Venture Partners leads 1st financing round of € 3 million**

Ghent, 24 June 2015 – The establishment of Confo Therapeutics, a spin-off of VIB and Vrije Universiteit Brussel, was announced today. A consortium led by Capricorn Health-Tech Fund with the participation of Qbic and SOFI contributed € 3 million in the first institutional round of investment. These resources will be used to develop further the innovative CONFO® technology platform and initiate drug discovery programs.

Confo Therapeutics originates from the CONFO® technology developed by **Prof. Jan Steyaert** and his team (**VIB/Vrije Universiteit Brussel**). For the first time, this technology allows medically relevant GPCRs (G-protein coupled receptors) to be stabilized in their active functional state, which is essential for drug discovery. Confo Therapeutics will start with a team of six employees, under the supervision of **Stephane van Rooijen**, formerly from Genzyme and Viropharma.

Stephane van Rooijen, CEO Confo Therapeutics: “Confo Therapeutics will position the revolutionary CONFO® technology as the new standard in the field of drug development. The company will build a portfolio of pre-clinical development programs in therapeutically relevant disease domains”.

Jan Steyaert, Scientific Founder & CSO: “I am truly satisfied that our research is now resulting in tangible applications for patients. Our new technology is facilitating the development of new drugs for diseases that are currently hard to treat or untreatable.”

Johan Cardoen, Managing Director VIB: “I think that I speak on behalf of all the investors when I say that we are delighted with this new biotech company and the creation of new jobs. For VIB it's essential to be able to rely on partners such as Qbic and Capricorn, the two main investors who supported this project from the start. The establishment of this start-up once again proves the importance of innovative basic research and the potential of our biotech sector”.

The technology tackles challenges of protein conformation in the development of new drugs

G-protein coupled receptors (GPCRs) are attractive drug targets in the treatment of a wide range of conditions, because they play an essential part in many life processes and therefore also in diseases. GPCRs are on-off switches located in the cell membrane and pass signals from outside into the cell through conformational changes in their structure. In the case of diseases, these signals are not passed on properly.

The Steyaert Lab, in collaboration with the lab of Prof. Brian Kobilka (Stanford University), was the first to use single domain antibodies to stabilize GPCRs in active states for crystallography. In this state, hidden cavities become accessible to small molecules. These small molecules are the starting point for the development of innovative drugs that bind in these hidden cavities in a specific and targeted manner, ensuring that the correct GPCR is switched on and that the desired signal is correctly passed on. This technology forms the basis of Confo Therapeutics to build a portfolio of pre-clinical development programs in therapeutically relevant disease domains.

Note to the editor

CONFO® is a registered trademark in the name of Confo Therapeutics NV.

The CONFO® technology was developed with the support of the Vlaams Gewest (IWT) and the Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest (Innoviris).

More info on Confo Therapeutics and the technology: www.confotherapeutics.com

CVs Stephane Van Rooijen, Jan Steyaert and the Confo Therapeutics team:

<http://confotherapeutics.com/about>

Credits

When reporting on this research, please mention all partners involved

VIB

VIB is a non-profit research institute in life sciences. About 1,400 scientists conduct strategic basic research on the molecular mechanisms that are responsible for the functioning of the human body, plants, and microorganisms. Through a close partnership with four Flemish universities – UGent, KU Leuven, University of Antwerp, and Vrije Universiteit Brussel – and a solid funding program, VIB unites the forces of 74 research groups in a single institute. The goal of the research is to extend the boundaries of our knowledge of life. Through its technology transfer activities, VIB translates research results into products for the benefit of consumers and patients and contributes to new economic activity. VIB develops and disseminates a wide range of scientifically substantiated information about all aspects of biotechnology. More information: www.vib.be

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

The Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) is a thriving university in the heart of Belgium and Europe, which in 1969-1970 split off from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), founded in 1834. VUB combines excellence in teaching with excellence in research. Several of its 150 research groups are top-ranked worldwide. The principle of independent research is central at VUB, but the quality of its undergraduate and graduate programs is no less important, as the university provides an environment where students are treated as individuals and supported in their personal development. Currently, VUB has some 9,000 students and 2,700 staff, divided over eight faculties and two Brussels campuses (in Etterbeek/Elsene and Jette). The VUB University Hospital is adjacent to the Medical Sciences campus in Jette and employs 3,000 people. More info: www.vub.ac.be/

Capricorn Venture Partners

Capricorn Venture Partners is an independent European manager of venture capital and equity funds, investing in innovative European companies with technology as competitive advantage. The investment team of Capricorn is composed of experienced investment managers with deep technology expertise and a broad industrial experience. Capricorn Venture Partners is investing out of the venture capital funds Capricorn Cleantech Fund, Capricorn Health-tech Fund and Capricorn ICT Fund. In addition it is the asset manager of Quest for Growth, quoted on NYSE Euronext Brussels, and the investment manager of Quest Cleantech Fund, sub-fund of Quest Management SICAV (www.capricorn.be).

Qbic

Qbic is an interuniversity risk capital fund investing in spin offs of the universities UGent, VUB, UAntwerpen, ULg, their associated Colleges and university hospitals, and VITO.

Qbic Fund has € 40,7 million under management and supports startup companies both financially as

well as with hands-on advice in their journey towards commercial success. Qbic Brussels Fund is a joint initiative with GIMB/SRIB and the Brussels Capital region. Qbic Arkiv Fund is a joint initiative with Arkimedes-Fund II (ARKimedes is an initiative of Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen NV and the Flemish Region). More info about Qbic can be found on www.qbic.be.

SOFI

With the SOFI-fund, Flanders makes budgets available to translate the ideas from promising researchers into new products, services and processes. SOFI (Spin-Off Financing Instrument) disposes over 20 million EUR venture capital for the start-up of new, innovative companies resulting from the success stories from strategic research centers in Flanders: iMinds (ICT and digital media), Imec (nanotechnology), VIB (biotechnology) and VITO (energy and sustainability). The first SOFI-fund financed 24 spin-off projects.

Because of the success, the Flemish government made additional risk capital available for innovation development at universities and colleges through SOFI II. Researchers are supported through capital or convertible loans up to 1 million EUR, but also through small starting loans up to 50 000 EUR. The Flemish investment company PMV coordinates the SOFI fund.