

Confo Therapeutics secures €6.7 million in first financing round

Investment will support first-in-class development programs for pathway selective drugs targeting GPCRs

Brussels, Tuesday 02 February, 2016 [09:00 GMT] – Confo Therapeutics, an emerging drug discovery company, announced today the completion of its first financing round at €6.7 million. Incorporated in June 2015 by VIB and lead investor Capricorn Venture Partners, Confo Therapeutics received its initial financing from the Capricorn Health-Tech Fund, Qbic and SOFI. MINTS (University of Michigan), Participatie Maatschappij Vlaanderen NV (PMV), V-Bio Ventures (V-Bio) and VIB have joined the initial investors syndicate.

Confo Therapeutics is a drug discovery company building a pipeline of development programs targeting G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) that are currently considered undruggable.

GPCRs are attractive drug targets in the treatment of a wide range of disease conditions with high unmet need. CONFO® technology allows medically relevant GPCRs to be stabilized in their active signaling state, revealing new binding pockets accessible for drug discovery.

The investment amount of €6.7 million will be used to further establish the company in agonist GPCR drug screening, expand the team and build a portfolio of first in class pre-clinical development programs in therapeutically relevant disease areas.

In addition, Confo Therapeutics secured an IP license agreement with university collaborators VIB, VUB, University of Michigan and Stanford University. Both VIB and University of Michigan (MINTS program) made a direct investment in the company.

Following this round of financing, the company board of directors will comprise of Els Beirnaert (VIB), Chris De Jonghe (PMV), Ekaterina Smirnyagina (Capricorn), Christina Takke (V-Bio), Marc Zabeau (Qbic) and Stephane van Rooijen (CEO).

Ekaterina Smirnyagina, Capricorn Venture Partners: “We have supported Confo Therapeutics since its inception and welcome the new investors. We look forward to working together on maximizing the value of the company’s truly innovative technology.”

Christina Takke, V-Bio Ventures: “V-Bio Ventures invests in early stage biopharmaceutical companies developing technologies that provide transformational improvements, supported by world class scientific research. This investment perfectly exemplifies V-Bio’s investment strategy and we are excited to contribute to the future success of this promising venture.”

Marc Zabeau, Qbic: “This financial backing is a clear endorsement of the potential of the CONFO® technology. Confo Therapeutics is ready for the next steps in its journey to deliver its development targets.”

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Note to the editor

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

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

About Confo Therapeutics

Confo Therapeutics is a novel VIB-VUB spin-off with a strong consortium of investors (Capricorn Venture Partners, MINTS, PMV, QBIC, SOFI, V-Bio Ventures, VIB). The company focuses on drug discovery, building a portfolio of first-in-class programs on pathway selective drugs. Driven by its proprietary CONFO® technology to empower the discovery of novel agonists for superior therapeutic intervention.

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.

CONFO® technology, using Confobodies (camelid single domain antibodies), reveals new druggable pockets by stabilizing the medically relevant active signaling state of the receptor. Performing drug screening on the signaling state of the GPCR makes the target accessible for drug discovery, allowing to develop agonists for targets that have been considered undruggable.

Confo Therapeutics is committed to delivering agonist drugs against selected high value GPCRs; to expedite screening and preclinical development, while reducing the resources required during this process; and to adding value in the drug discovery value chain beyond high throughput screening, including structure-based screening. CONFO® technology will facilitate the development of new medicines to treat diseases with high unmet need.

About VIB

Basic research in life sciences is VIB's raison d'être. On the one hand, we are pushing the boundaries of what we know about molecular mechanisms and how they rule living organisms such as human beings, animals, plants and microorganisms. On the other, we are creating tangible results for the benefit of society. Based on a close partnership with five Flemish universities – Ghent University, KU Leuven, University of Antwerp, Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Hasselt University – and supported by a solid funding program, VIB unites the expertise of 75 research groups in a single institute. VIB's technology transfer activities translate research results into new economic ventures which, in time, lead to new products that can be used in medicine, agriculture and other applications. VIB also engages actively in the public debate on biotechnology by developing and disseminating a wide range of science-based information about all aspects of biotechnology. More information: www.vib.be.

About the investors

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).

MINTS – University of Michigan

The Regents of the University of Michigan through its “MINTS” program (Michigan Investment in New Technology Startups) participates in direct investments in companies based on technology developed at and licensed from the University. The MINTS program is part of the endowment’s venture capital portfolio. <http://www.bf.umich.edu/investments.html>

PMV

PMV is a do and dare company that shapes the economic future of Flanders. PMV finances promising companies from the very start to growth and internationalization. PMV offers tailor-made financial solutions for every entrepreneur with a solid business plan and a strong management team, by providing venture capital, loans and guarantees. An experienced and highly motivated team of 120 professionals endeavors every day to achieve the goal of creating prosperity and well-being in Flanders. By the end of 2015, PMV had a portfolio of about 1 billion in assets under management. More info about PMV can be found on www.pmv.eu

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 bridge the equity gap, faced by early ventures, aiming at translating 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 Flemish investment company PMV coordinates the SOFI fund.

V-Bio Ventures



V-Bio Ventures is an independent venture capital firm specialized in building and financing young, innovative life science companies. V-Bio Ventures was established in 2015 and works closely with Belgium-based VIB, one of the world's premier life science institutes. The fund invests throughout Europe in start-up and early-stage companies with high growth potential focusing on technologies that provide transformational improvements in the biopharmaceutical, pharmaceutical, diagnostics and agricultural sectors (www.v-bio.ventures).