

NLSInvest: What's in it for Nordic Life Science companies?



Brad Young
Co-Founder & CBO,
Ciana Therapeutics

Ciana's focus is on diabetic retinopathy. Can you please describe your unique approach?

– Thank you for the invitation to discuss our company. At Ciana Therapeutics, we are developing first-in-class and best-in-disease therapies for diabetic retinopathy, which is a serious complication of diabetes that afflicts over 30 million patients in the US and Europe alone. Our lead therapy, danegaptide is a clinical asset with a proven safety profile and strong efficacy in preclinical models of diabetic retinopathy. Danegaptide can uniquely protect from both retinal capillary loss and vascular leakage caused by the hyperglycemia stressed conditions in the eye and address the need for treatments that act earlier in the disease process, upstream of the leading anti-VEGF therapies.

Do you see any global trends in this area?

– Yes, we see several emerging trends. Physicians are seeking new therapies with improved efficacy and duration, especially for the large percentage of patients with moderate to severe, non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy. This is of major concern as these patients have already suffered retinal damage and are at high risk of progressing to the severe stages of disease associated with debilitation vision loss and blindness. The increased availability of cost-effective imaging devices enables not only ophthalmologists, but also optometrists and general practitioners to detect retinal damage in the eye earlier in the disease process. This earlier detection of diabetic retinopathy is driving the

need for therapies that can treat this retinal pathology earlier and improve patient outcomes.

Nordic Life Science Invest and Nordic Life Science Days will attract delegates from all over the world including investors and big companies looking for novel ideas and seeking collaborations. What do you hope to achieve by participating in these meetings?

– We are pleased to be participating in this meeting. We hope to increase awareness about the need for therapies that can both treat diabetic retinopathy and prevent progression to the later, severe stages associated with debilitating vision loss and blindness. Currently, we are raising a Series A, capital investment to support the completion of our on-going preclinical studies and open an IND (Investigational New Drug application) within the year. This will enable Ciana to initiate clinical trials showing the safety and efficacy of our lead therapy, danegaptide to address the large unmet need for better treatments in patients with moderate to severe, non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy.



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Finnur Friðrik Einarsson
COO,
Epiendo Pharmaceuticals

Epiendo Pharmaceuticals focus is on chronic respiratory diseases. Can you please describe your unique approach?

– Our focus is on chronic inflammatory diseases of the epithelium, this thin layer of cells that in a normal, healthy states acts as a barrier to the external world. More specifically we focus on granulocytic inflammatory diseases that have shown to respond to Macrolide drugs. Unlike many mainstream approaches to inflammation, that are directly targeting inflammatory cascades, our focus and unique approach is on the causal role of the epithelium in these chronic inflammatory diseases. When inflammation or infection develops, the loss of epithelial integrity increases the exposure of underlying tissue to allergens and infection, causing a vicious cycle of chronic inflammation that never resolves. We aim to break this vicious cycle with our “pro-epithelial” compounds that we call Barriolides by strengthen the epithelium which in turn reduces the need of constant repair (granulocytic inflammation) and decreases the exposure to allergens and infection.

Do you see any global trends in this area?

– There is definitely more interest in respiratory diseases now than it was before the pandemic and in general we are noticing more and more groups that are looking at the causal role of the epithelium, tight junctions and “leakiness” of the epithelium in various diseases which is great news. We are not seeing any new trends in drug development towards chronic airway diseases like

COPD (our lead program) with only one novel drug class approved in the last 25 years.

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– We are currently raising 12 million euros to fund our phase 2a clinical studies so we are hoping to meet up with investors that share our vision and want to bring our new therapeutic approach to patients in need.

