

Servier and the Autonomous University of Barcelona collaborate to accelerate research into Parkinson's disease

Paris (France) and Barcelona (Spain), June, 30 2020 – Servier, an international independent pharmaceutical company, and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), have signed a partnership agreement to speed up research into Parkinson's disease, using a new method for small-molecule screening developed by Prof Salvador Ventura, PhD, group leader at the Institute of Biotechnology and Biomedicine (IBB) and at the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department at the UAB.

Within the framework of this agreement, scientists from Servier will collaborate with Prof Ventura's teams to further develop and identify chemical series capable of neutralizing the pathogenicity of α -synuclein, a protein which is of major importance, not only in Parkinson's disease, but also in several other neurodegenerative diseases.

"The discovery of new drugs to treat neurodegenerative and neuropsychiatric diseases is a key focus for Servier as there remain many unmet needs for patients with these pathologies," stated Ross Jeggo, Director of Neuropsychiatric Research for the Servier Group. "Thanks to Prof Ventura's high-level expertise, this collaboration represents an opportunity for Servier to significantly accelerate research and the availability of therapeutic solutions to patients who suffer from Parkinson's disease and related neurodegenerative disorders."

The group led by Prof Ventura has a long experience in the study of protein misfolding and aggregation and their connection with neurodegenerative diseases, with a particular focus on the development of innovative therapeutics for these pathologies. They have developed a methodology that allows identifying candidates targeting α -synuclein among thousands of chemical compounds. "The collaboration with Servier will allow us to join efforts in the search and development of a molecule which can be used for the treatment and, hopefully, the prevention of Parkinson's disease" pointed out Prof Ventura.

Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disease, after Alzheimer disease, and affects about 10 million people worldwide¹. Parkinson's disease is caused by the progressive degeneration – or even disappearance – of neurons, in particular in the area of the brain specifically responsible for the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter involved in motor control. Age is the main risk factor for this disease, which targets in particular the ability to perform normal movements. To date, major medical needs for this disease have not been met, as there are no treatments available which have demonstrated a neuroprotective or neuroregenerative effect.

¹ Parkinson's Foundation - <https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Statistics>

About Servier

Servier is an international pharmaceutical company governed by a non-profit foundation, with its headquarters in France (Suresnes). With a strong international presence in 149 countries and a total revenue of 4.6 billion euros in 2019, Servier employs 22,000 people worldwide. Entirely independent, the Group invests on average 25% of its total revenue (excluding generics) every year in research and development and uses all its profits for its development. Corporate growth is driven by Servier's constant search for innovation in five areas of excellence: cardiovascular, immune-inflammatory, and neurodegenerative diseases, cancer and diabetes, as well as by its activities in high-quality generic drugs. Servier also offers eHealth solutions beyond drug development.

Highly committed to neuropsychiatry, Servier offers innovative treatments to patients suffering from neurologic disorders. Its research teams are working on new approaches for the treatment of a range of neurodegenerative disorders, by targeting the toxic proteins responsible for neuronal degeneration. Priority is given to fighting the causes of these diseases rather than treating their symptoms. Currently the Group has a candidate drug in Phase III for autism, and five other research projects at different stages in this area of great medical need. This portfolio of innovative treatments has been developed with academic and industrial partners around the world.

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About Institute of Biotechnology and Biomedicine (IBB)

The Institute of Biotechnology and Biomedicine (IBB) was created in 1970 as a research institute of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). The over 200 researchers currently working at the IBB conduct top-level scientific research with the aim of advancing scientific findings into translational results, to revert the knowledge to society.

The IBB hosts 18 research groups organised into 3 programmes covering different areas of scientific expertise that include bioinformatics, cellular and structural biology, genomics, immunology, microbiology and proteomics. Their researchers participate in high competitive calls, both national and internationally, aimed at funding basic and translational research.

More information: <https://ibb.uab.cat/>