



PRESS RELEASE

Servier and UCL collaborate in fight against immune-inflammatory diseases

Accelerating the discovery of new treatments for immune-inflammatory diseases, including lupus and systemic sclerosis, is the focus of a new strategic research collaboration between Servier and UCL.

Paris and London, December 10, 2019 - Under an initial two-year agreement, Servier, an independent international pharmaceutical company, will share scientific knowledge and support two UCL-led research projects investigating which pathways are pathologically altered in people with lupus, and how systemic sclerosis develops.

By better understanding the mechanisms behind each disease, the teams hope to develop much-needed new drugs and therapeutic approaches to treat the conditions.

Lupus affects approximately 100 in 100,000 people in UK¹ and between 3 and 200 in 100,000 people globally². It is a poorly understood disease and occurs when the body's immune system attacks tissues and organs, causing inflammation that can damage any part of the body, potentially leading to organ failure.

Professor Derek Gilroy, Chair of Experimental Inflammation and Pharmacology (UCL Medicine), said: "We know how the body's immune system switches off some functions after it has responded to bouts of infection or experienced an injury. We think that these internal checkpoints are altered in people who have chronic inflammatory diseases such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and even cancer. My team is looking forward to combining expertise and resources with Servier to try to understand how the underlying immune system in patients with a disease like lupus fails to resolve, giving rise to the debilitating symptoms and shortened life span associated with this disease."

Systemic sclerosis, also known as scleroderma, is a rare chronic disease thought to affect up to 2.5 million people worldwide³. It is characterized by thickening and scarring of connective tissue throughout the body, including in the skin, joints, and internal organs.

To date, its cause is unknown but scientists, including Professors Christopher Denton and David Abraham (both UCL Medicine), are leading teams researching the underlying molecular and cellular mechanisms of the disease.

¹ <https://www.lupusuk.org.uk/medical/nurses-guide/what-is-lupus/>

² Decision Resources GROUP : <https://decisionresourcesgroup.com/>

³ <https://www.sruk.co.uk/scleroderma/what-scleroderma/>





“Scleroderma is a disease that leads to scarring and fibrosis in many organs, with limited treatments available. This collaboration will help define the potential of new treatment approaches that could have long-term impact in scleroderma but also in many other diseases where scarring and blood vessel damage occur,” said Professor Denton.

“Collaboration with academia is one of the main levers of our strategy to contribute to research to accelerate the discovery and development of innovative treatments for patients. The UCL team we are working with have considerable expertise in both lupus and systemic sclerosis, and they are based at one of the top institutions for medical and health research globally,” said Dr Claude Bertrand, Executive Vice-President Research & Development at Servier.

Professor Robert Kleta, Director of the UCL Division of Medicine, added: “As one of the largest concentrations of biomedical scientists in Europe, in one of the world's leading universities, our research aims to understand the basis of disease, and to develop better diagnostics and treatments. The Division already has a track record of discovery in immune-inflammatory diseases. This exciting new partnership with Servier will build upon this expertise and I greatly look forward to the new advances that will result.”

Dr Philippe Moingeon, Head of Servier Center for Therapeutic Innovation in Immuno-Inflammatory diseases, added: “We are looking forward to creating synergies between Servier and UCL scientific expertise, with the aim of a successful and fast translation into therapeutic solutions for the benefit of patients suffering from lupus and systemic sclerosis.”

UCL Innovation & Enterprise actively engages partners outside of academia, including in the pharmaceutical sector, with the aim of developing long-term strategic relationships.

Dr Celia Caulcott, UCL Vice-Provost (Enterprise), said: “The major health challenges of the 21st century involve conditions with complex, multifaceted pathology and making progress will absolutely require collaboration between the best research minds in universities and our innovative partners in industry. The immune-inflammatory diseases are an excellent case in point, and I am excited and hopeful about the future potential of this strategic research collaboration between UCL and Servier. And, I believe it will be a model for further collaboration between clinical academic research and industry for a whole host of therapeutic areas.”

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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 turnover of 4.2 billion euros in 2018, Servier employs 22 000 people worldwide. Entirely independent, the Group reinvests 25% of its turnover (excluding generics) in research and development and uses all its profits for 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.



Becoming a key player in the fight against immune-inflammatory disease is part of Servier's long-term strategy. Servier wishes to bring innovative therapeutic solutions to patients suffering from these often highly debilitating pathologies. Its research focuses on lupus, Gougerot-Sjögren syndrome and scleroderma, for which no cure exists. This goal will be reached by establishing partnerships all over the world, in order to accelerate the marketing of innovative drugs with high added value for patients.

More information: www.servier.com

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About UCL (University College London)

UCL is a diverse community with the freedom to challenge and think differently.

Our community of more than 41,500 students from 150 countries and over 12,500 staff pursues academic excellence, breaks boundaries and makes a positive impact on real world problems.

We are consistently ranked among the top 10 universities in the world and are one of only a handful of institutions rated as having the strongest academic reputation and the broadest research impact.

We have a progressive and integrated approach to our teaching and research – championing innovation, creativity and cross-disciplinary working. We teach our students how to think, not what to think, and see them as partners, collaborators and contributors.

For almost 200 years, we are proud to have opened higher education to students from a wide range of backgrounds and to change the way we create and share knowledge.

We were the first in England to welcome women to university education and that courageous attitude and disruptive spirit is still alive today. We are UCL.

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About UCL Innovation & Enterprise

UCL has a rich history of discovery and innovation spanning over 100 years – from the development of the thermionic valve which ushered in the electronics age in the late 19th Century, to pioneering cancer immunotherapy in the 21st Century.

Today, UCL Innovation & Enterprise helps UCL's community of staff, students and alumni to realise the potential of their ideas and take them out into the wider world for the benefit of society. There are many ways to achieve this, including partnering with charities or businesses; developing short courses for professionals and organisations; providing consultancy to industry, government and policy-makers; and commercialising discoveries.

UCL's ambition is to change the world for the better and tackle the great global challenges of our time. UCL Innovation & Enterprise is at the heart of this aspiration.

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