ACESION PHARMA APPOINTS EXPERIENCED INDUSTRY LEADER FRANS WUITE AS CEO

COPENHAGEN, Denmark - Acesion Pharma, a pharmaceutical company developing novel first-in-class drugs to treat atrial fibrillation (AF), announced today that it has appointed Frans Wuite, M.D., M.B.A., as Chief Executive Officer and Ulrik Sørensen, PhD, as Chief Operating Officer.

Frans Wuite has a track record of driving successful clinical development and commercialization programmes. His appointment comes as Acesion accelerates the preclinical development of its first development candidate for the acute cardioversion of AF.

Dr Wuite has more than 25 years pharmaceutical industry experience encompassing leadership roles in start-ups through to large, international companies. Prior to joining Acesion, Wuite led Oncos Therapeutics, a clinical stage cancer immunotherapy company which was successfully merged with Targovax in 2015. At Oncos he spearheaded fund raising and business development initiatives in the US and Europe. Wuite also pioneered the commercial development and launch of Amgen’s anaemia therapy, Aranesp in Europe, which rapidly became the company’s biggest product. He also gained early stage clinical development experience at Warren & Araim Pharmaceuticals in the US. Wuite is a board director of Healthcap VII GP S.A. and Herantis Pharma Ltd (HRTIS).

Ulrik Sørensen, the founding CEO of Acesion since 2011, has successfully raised substantial funding from Danish and international investors, including Wellcome Trust, Novo and Broadview Ventures and together with co-founder and CSO Morten Grunnet, built Acesion Pharma into a pharmaceutical company with a portfolio of first-in-class, small molecule drugs for the treatment of atrial fibrillation.

Ingelise Saunders, Chairman of Acesion Pharma commented
‘We are delighted to welcome Frans to the company at a pivotal time in its evolution. We will soon progress our first development candidate for acute cardioversion of atrial fibrillation and our focus now is to move this programme forward towards human clinical evaluation. Working as a team, Frans and Ulrik will drive progress as Acesion enters this exciting phase of rapid development.’

Acesion’s first development candidate has shown early promise in a number of animal studies demonstrating that it is an effective anti-arrhythmic that acts rapidly in bringing the heart from AF back to normal heart rhythm.
Background

Acesion Pharma is a Danish pharmaceutical company founded in 2011 and based in Copenhagen. Acesion Pharma develops more efficacious and safe drugs for the treatment of atrial fibrillation (AF). AF is the most common type of cardiac arrhythmia and is characterized by an irregular and abnormally high contraction frequency in the upper chambers of the heart, the atria. It mainly affects the elderly population and it is estimated that more than 4.5 million people in the EU and up to 6 million people in the US have AF. AF is associated with impaired quality of life, increased rate of hospitalization, and increased risk of stroke and death. As a consequence of the increase in age of the population and in lifestyle related diseases, the numbers of AF patients are expected to rise significantly, with an associated increase in the economic burden of AF.

AF is often treated with electrical shock (DC cardioversion), delivered during general anesthesia, and/or medical treatment, which bring the heart back to its normal sinus rhythm. Existing drug therapies have only limited effect and/or are associated with risk of serious adverse effects, including risk of acutely life-threatening ventricular arrhythmia. There exist therefore a high unmet need for developing more efficacious and safe drugs for the medical treatment of AF.

Acesion’s approach centres on the inhibition of SK channels, ion channels with relevance for regulating heart rhythm and which constitute a new and promising principle for the treatment of AF. Acesion Pharma aims to develop first-in-class SK channel inhibitors as more efficacious and safe treatments of AF.

Equity investors in Acesion Pharma include Novo Seeds, the early stage investment group of Novo A/S, Wellcome Trust and Broadview Ventures.

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