



PRESS RELEASE

AptaTargets closes €2.7 million round of funding for new stroke treatment

"la Caixa" and Inveready have invested in the Spanish biopharmaceutical firm

This drug candidate could revolutionise treatment of a disease that affects 15 million people worldwide each year

In collaboration with the Complutense University of Madrid and Ramón y Cajal Institute for Health Research

Madrid (Spain), 17 May 2017 - "la Caixa", through their venture capital arm [Caixa Capital Risc](#), and [Inveready](#) have invested €2.7 million in [AptaTargets](#), which will allow this biopharmaceutical company to complete the preclinical phase and move into phase I and II clinical trials on its first drug candidate (ApTOLL) to **treat acute ischemic stroke**. The operation was guided by the firm [Rousaud Costas Duran](#).

"ApTOLL has the potential to **revolutionise clinical response** to this disease," highlights David Segarra, co-founder and CEO of AptaTargets, which is based in Madrid (Spain). It is an **immunomodulatory molecule** that could help **reduce cerebral inflammation** caused by stroke. This therapy would prevent death and improve recovery. Currently, treatment of the acute phase of ischemic stroke is limited to rechanneling obstructed arteries. This method can be used in 5% of all patients, as it is only administered within 4.5 hours of the attack.

AptaTargets' innovative technology

AptaTargets is the first Spanish biotechnology company to specialise in aptamers, DNA or RNA molecules that can recognise and bond with highly specific therapeutic targets and are an **alternative to antibodies**. These molecules have many advantages over antibodies, including greater reproducibility and stability, as well as lower immunogenicity and smaller size, "which means greater capacity to cross biological barriers," explains Segarra.

The first product being developed with these molecules is [ApTOLL](#), which in addition to blocking a key receptor in activating inflammatory processes in **vascular diseases** (stroke or myocardial infarction), **autoimmune diseases and cancer**. So, in the long term, the scientific team at AptaTargets plans to apply it to treatments for multiple sclerosis, sepsis, insulin resistance, retinitis, atherosclerosis and myocardial infarction, among other conditions.

The origin of this technology lies in the academic arena, more than ten years ago. From that research, AptaTargets identified and characterised a pool of molecules for pharmacological targets in the therapeutic area of stroke and selected ApTOLL as the best candidate.

Public-private partnership

AptaTargets is collaborating on this project with the Neurovascular Research Unit of the Complutense University of Madrid Faculty of Medicine and is led by professors Ignacio Lizasoain and M^a Ángeles Moro, whose research laboratory is an international benchmark in neurovascular disease, and with the Aptamers Group at the Ramón y Cajal Institute for Health Research (IRYCIS) led by Dr Víctor M. González, world renowned in aptamer technology.

15 million people suffer stroke worldwide each year

Stroke is a cerebrovascular illness caused by a decrease or obstruction of blood flow and has a high incidence everywhere in the world (200-250 cases a year per 100,000 inhabitants, on average). The socioeconomic repercussions of stroke are of the highest order and, in addition to high mortality it is also the most significant cause of permanent disability.

According to the World Health Organization, **ischaemic heart disease and stroke are the world's biggest killers**. 15 million people suffer stroke worldwide each year. Of these, 5 million die (650,000 in Europe and 140,000 in USA) and another 5 million are permanently disabled, according Stroke Center.

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About AptaTargets

AptaTargets is a biopharmaceutical company started in 2016 to develop innovative molecules using aptamer technology. The company develops neuroprotective and immunomodulatory molecules from the preclinical phases through clinical proof-of-concept. The founders of the company are David Segarra (CEO), an entrepreneur and advisor to biotechnology firms, research centres and the European Commission on biotechnology projects; and M^a Eugenia Zarabozo (CLO and CFO), entrepreneur and expert in licensing, patents and regulatory development of healthcare products. AptaTargets is a member of the Spanish Bioindustry Association (Asebio).

About Caixa Capital Risc

Caixa Capital Risc, the venture capital arm of “la Caixa”, invests in innovative SMEs in the early phases. Caixa Capital Risc currently manages nearly €200 million through eight investment vehicles and has a portfolio of 175 companies. It is a multisector investor that focuses mainly on emerging sectors: technology, digital industry, industrial technology and the life sciences.

About Inveready

Inveready is one of the leading early-stage venture capital funds in Spain. It currently has six investment vehicles through which it manages €90 million. Inveready invests in technology-based companies with high potential for growth and innovative business models. It currently has more than 70 companies in its portfolio that are leaders in their respective sectors.

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