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Ferronova and Purdue Research Foundation (PRF) sign licensing agreement for use of Fibroblast Activation Protein (FAP) inhibitor in radiotherapy

ADELAIDE--Australian biotech company Ferronova announced today that it has signed a licensing agreement with the Purdue Research Foundation (PRF) for the application of PRF's patented Fibroblast Activation Protein (FAP) inhibitor in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and MRI-guided therapies.

The licensing agreement will bring together Ferronova's patented FerroTrace® platform, a super-paramagnetic iron-oxide nanoparticle (SPION) formulation, and PRF's patented FAP inhibitor in a combination to be applied in targeted radiotherapy of difficult cancers with complicated treatment margins such as glioblastoma, prostate cancer and pancreatic cancer.

"Purdue researchers are the driving force behind world changing innovations, and our partnership with Ferronova serves as yet another testament to our dedication to partnering with companies that can improve the world and save lives with Purdue technologies," said Brooke Beier, senior vice president of Purdue Innovates. "This is an example of intellectual property protection from the laboratory of a world-renowned Purdue innovator, and we are excited about the boundless potential of many more Purdue technologies that will make an impact."

In recent years, FAP has received increasing attention as a cancer treatment target, due to its prominent expression in solid tumours but virtual absence from healthy tissues.¹ Led by renowned researcher Philip Low, the Presidential Scholar for Drug Discovery and Ralph C. Corley Distinguished Professor for Chemistry at the Purdue University College of Science's Department of Chemistry, researchers at Purdue University developed an FAP inhibitor that works by inhibiting a pathway associated with the formation of cancer-associated fibroblasts (CAFs), cells that regulate tumour growth. In addition to reducing CAF formation, the inhibitory agent also reduces collagen I formation, a protein that is associated with tumour growth.²

"This licensing and collaboration agreement is great news as it signals a new approach in targeted radiotherapy for the treatment of glioblastoma," said Associate Professor Hien Le, a radiation oncologist at South Australia (SA) Health, Head of Research at the Department of Radiation Oncology at Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH), and Associate Professor at the University of South Australia. "We look forward to the collaboration and progressing the new approach to the clinic to see how the combination of FerroTrace® and the FAP inhibitor will impact practice in glioblastoma."

Ferronova is collaborating with the University of South Australia and the University of Sydney on the development of FerroTrace® and the FAP inhibitor. The program is funded by a Cooperative Research Centres Project (CRC-P) grant with other partners including Siemens, The Australian Bragg Centre for Proton Therapy and Research, the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) and the University of Sydney.

Glioblastoma is the most common and aggressive primary malignant tumour of the central nervous system, and the current standard of care comprises cytoreductive surgery followed by adjuvant chemoradiotherapy. However, despite aggressive chemoradiotherapy and maximum surgical

¹ Lindeman SD, *et al.* *J Nucl Med* 2023;64(5):759-766.

² Purdue Research Foundation – Fibroblast Activation Protein (FAP)-Targeted Antifibrotic Therapy. Available at <https://inventions.prf.org/innovation/7975>. Accessed of 3 August 2023.



resection, survival in patients with glioblastoma remains poor with a median overall survival of 13.5 months, and 5-year survival rates of only 5.8%.³

“There is an urgent need for glioblastoma-specific agents to distinguish between glioblastoma and surrounding normal tissue,” noted Ferronova CEO, Stewart Bartlett. “We are hopeful that this collaboration will change that, and in future, have a positive impact on the management of patients with this tragic disease.”

About Ferronova

Ferronova is an Australian biotechnology company with a vision to give everyone diagnosed with cancer their best chance to become cancer free. Its shareholders include Renew Pharmaceuticals, Uniseed, Artesian Ventures, the South Australian Venture Capital Fund (SAVCF), Australian Unity, the University of South Australia, PAN Ventures, Powerhouse Ventures, the University of Wellington in New Zealand, and the University of Sydney. Grant assistance has been provided by the SA Government since 2016, the Federal Government’s BioMedTech Horizons Program operated by MTP Connect, and the Australian Government CRC-P program. For more information go to:

www.ferronova.com.au

About Purdue Research Foundation

Purdue Research Foundation is a private, nonprofit foundation created to advance the mission of Purdue University. Established in 1930, the foundation accepts gifts; administers trusts; funds scholarships and grants; acquires and sells property; protects and licenses Purdue's intellectual property; and supports creating Purdue-connected startups on behalf of Purdue. The foundation operates Purdue Innovates which includes the Purdue Office of Technology Commercialization, Incubator, Startup Foundry and Ventures. The foundation manages the Purdue Research Park, Discovery Park District, Purdue Technology Centers and Purdue for Life Foundation.

For more information on licensing a Purdue innovation, contact the Office of Technology Commercialization at otcip@prf.org. For more information about involvement and investment opportunities in startups based on a Purdue innovation, contact Purdue Innovates at purdueinnovates@prf.org.

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³ Marenco-Hillebrand L, et al. *J Neurooncol* 2020;147:297-307.