

UCSD Health Sciences Partners with Pfizer to Speed Drug Delivery

Research agreement could represent more than \$50 million over five years for development of new therapies to benefit major medical needs

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In an innovative collaboration designed to speed the process of drug discovery, Pfizer, Inc. and the University of California, San Diego Health Sciences announced today that UC San Diego has joined the ranks of other top-tier life science research institutions across the country as part of Pfizer's Centers for Therapeutic Innovation (CTI).

"The collaborative partnerships formed through the Centers for Therapeutic Innovation between Pfizer and academic medical centers such as UC San Diego allow leading medical and clinical experts to join with Pfizer's highly skilled scientists - using Pfizer's resources and expertise and each institution's advanced drug development capabilities to speed the translation of innovative science into medicine for patients," said Jose Carlos Gutierrez-Ramos, PhD, senior vice president and head of BioTherapeutics Research and Development for Pfizer.

CTI differs from other such programs that seek to drive innovation in drug discovery by providing a non-traditional business model based on continuous collaboration and transparency, one which offers well-defined incentives for success to its participants. For example, as part of the CTI program, Pfizer will provide UC San Diego researchers access to some of its antibody libraries and technologies, as well as funding to support the pre-clinical and clinical development of sponsored programs. CTI partners receive intellectual property rights and are granted milestone payments and royalties tied to the advancement of mutually agreed-upon drug candidates. The potential value to UC San Diego over the five-year agreement could exceed \$50 million.

"Public-private partnerships are increasingly important in science, especially in an era of limited federal grant support, when new resources are needed to commercialize innovations related to health care," said UC San Diego Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. "The UC San Diego-Pfizer agreement is an example of how we can work together and will hopefully serve as a model for other collaborations with industry."

According to Gary S. Firestein, MD, dean and associate vice chancellor of Translational Medicine and director of the Clinical and Translational Research Institute (CTRI) at UC San Diego School of Medicine, the collaboration utilizes UC San Diego's medical research strengths in key areas including neurosciences, cancer, inflammation, metabolism, clinical pharmacology, HIV and pain. It will also build upon efforts of the School of Medicine's expanding CTRI, launched in 2010 to emphasize interdisciplinary collaboration among UCSD scientists and develop innovative approaches to solve difficult medical challenges. Last year, the CTRI received a five-year, \$37.2 million award from the National Center for Research Resources, part of the National Institutes of Health - an award also designed to improve biomedical research by accelerating the application of laboratory discoveries into effective treatment for patients, more actively engaging communities in clinical research and training future generations of researchers.

David Brenner, MD, vice chancellor for health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine at UC San Diego, concurred that more research collaborations between academia and industry will be critical in the face of the uncertain support from the state and federal government.

"As medical science evolves and grows, the demand for creative research projects - such as this agreement with Pfizer - and the need for people who can translate this basic research into real, beneficial therapies and treatments will only increase," said Brenner. "From the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center and the many other leading-edge research institutes on campus, to our deep involvement in major clinical trials and status as one of the nation's top teaching hospitals, UC San Diego has established itself as a vital hub for this kind of innovative work. The Pfizer collaboration allows us, with CTRI leading the way, to push ahead in new and even more imaginative ways to advance medical research."

CTI laboratory staff will include Pfizer employees plus leading basic and translational science investigators and doctoral candidates from UC San Diego School of Medicine and the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, along with other UCSD researchers in biological sciences, bioengineering and at the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2).

"The CTI model offers leading investigators the resources to pursue scientific and clinical breakthroughs by providing access to select Pfizer compound libraries, proprietary screening methods, and antibody development technologies that are directly relevant to the investigators' work," said Firestein, adding the hoped-for result will be better testing of clinical hypotheses, increasing the speed with which medicines can be delivered to patients in need.

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