



**Camino Pharma receives \$1.97M Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)
Grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**
New class of drugs focuses on alcohol use disorder

San Diego, Calif., Dec. 7, 2023 – Camino Pharma, LLC, a biotech company focused on finding cures for cancer and brain disorders, announced today that its co-founder and CSO, Reto Gadiant, Ph.D., has been awarded a two-year, \$1.97M grant by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number U43AA031388 and is the Principal Investigator (PI) on the grant. The grant will fund a collaborative effort between Camino Pharma, LLC, Sanford Burnham Prebys and Wake Forest University School of Medicine to validate positive allosteric modulators (PAMs) of metabotropic glutamate receptor 2 (mGlu₂) for the treatment of alcohol use disorder (AUD).

“This exciting collaboration between Camino Pharma, Sanford Burnham Prebys and Wake Forest University School of Medicine will facilitate the development of novel therapeutic options for patients afflicted with AUD,” says Gonul Velicelebi, Ph.D., co-founder and CEO of the company.

“We are optimistic that our mGlu₂ PAMs, all discovered at Sanford Burnham Prebys, could provide us with a positive preclinical proof-of-concept in relevant rodent models of AUD. Such a result would support advancing one of our mGlu₂ PAMs towards clinical development to target AUD.” adds Gadiant.

The grant will enable the multidisciplinary team of scientists to evaluate mGlu₂ PAMs in two rodent models of alcohol dependence. “These models show symptoms and behaviors seen in patients with AUD, such as increased alcohol consumption, binge drinking, withdrawal and sleep disturbances. Reducing alcohol intake, withdrawal symptoms or improving sleep in these models will provide us with compelling evidence that efficacy may be obtained in the clinic.” says Robert Warren Gould, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine and a co-PI on the grant.

“A large body of experimental evidence suggests that elevated glutamate neurotransmission is involved in the pathophysiology of substance use disorders, including AUD,” says Douglas Sheffler, Ph.D., Research Assistant Professor at Sanford Burnham Prebys, also a co-PI on the grant. “Our compounds decrease glutamate neurotransmission by positively modulating mGlu₂, and therefore represent a novel mechanism distinct from other drugs currently in use for the treatment of AUD.”



About metabotropic glutamate receptors (mGlu)

The mGlu receptors are a family of eight subtypes of G protein-coupled glutamate receptors that are widely expressed in the central nervous system (CNS) and are classified into three groups based on sequence homology and signaling mechanisms. The group II mGlu (mGlu₂ and mGlu₃) are located presynaptically at glutamatergic synapses where they play a key role in maintaining glutamate homeostasis. mGlu₂ and mGlu₃ are abundantly expressed in forebrain regions affected in depression, where they modulate glutamate transmission and the release of other neurotransmitters involved in reward processing. mGlu₂ and mGlu₃ are also abundantly expressed in brain regions implicated in drug abuse and addiction, including the cortex, hippocampus, striatum and amygdala. Thus, negative modulators of presynaptic mGlu₂ and mGlu₃ represent a new class of drugs to treat depression, and positive modulators for substance use disorders, including AUD. Camino Pharma is collaborating with Sanford Burnham Prebys to pursue both strategies.

About Camino Pharma, LLC (www.caminopharma.com)

Camino Pharma is a San Diego-based start-up focused on discovering and developing first-in-class therapies for patients afflicted with cancer and CNS disorders. We target signaling proteins based on emerging biological concepts and discover novel mechanisms for modulating these targets with small molecule drugs. Our leadership team has proven expertise in the relevant target biology, as well as extensive experience in drug discovery and development. Our goal is to discover and develop novel, first-in-class to treat (1) the most aggressive forms of cancer with currently limited treatment options, and (2) psychiatric disorders that are poorly addressed by current medications, including substance use and major depression. Our innovative technology platform allows for exploiting inadequately served targets that require a highly adaptive and specialized approach to drug discovery. We intend to use our deep understanding in target biology, combined with extremely tailored, cutting-edge discovery technologies, to find novel cures.

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