

Aviragen Therapeutics licenses Georgia State Technology to develop antiviral therapies

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Dr. Richard Plemper, professor at Georgia State University and head of a drug discovery laboratory at the Georgia State Institute for Biomedical Sciences. Credit: Georgia State University

The Georgia State University Research Foundation (GSURF) has entered into a licensing and sponsored research agreement with Aviragen Therapeutics, Inc., a Georgia-based pharmaceutical company developing the next generation of antivirals, to develop and commercialize respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) replication inhibitors.

RSV infection is the leading cause of virus-induced death among children below one year of age. The virus is responsible for more than 120,000 infant hospitalizations annually in the United States and can also be life-threatening to the elderly and people whose immune systems have been compromised.

The technology was discovered by Dr. Richard Plemper, professor at Georgia State University, principal investigator and head of a drug discovery laboratory at the Georgia State Institute for Biomedical Sciences (IBMS), and his team at IBMS. Plemper's laboratory seeks to open novel therapeutic avenues against RSV by selectively blocking the viral replication machinery with small-molecule drugs. Since RSV load in the first days after hospitalization is recognized as a determinant for disease severity, therapeutics pursued by the Plemper laboratory may prevent severe RSV disease and improve management of RSV infection.

"My group has generated a portfolio of next generation RSV drug candidates and we are excited to partner with Aviragen to jointly develop the full clinical potential of these inhibitors," said Plemper said. "RSV infection can be particularly devastating to infants and the elderly. By joining forces with Aviragen, we will apply our highly complementary sets of expertise in an effort to address the problem."

Plemper's research focuses on clinically significant members of the myxovirus families such as influenza virus and RSV. Studying the molecular replication mechanism of these pathogens, his laboratory has developed innovative drug screening technologies for the identification and characterization of much-needed novel therapeutics.

"We are thrilled to begin this collaboration with Dr. Plemper as we broaden our internal efforts to develop RSV non-fusion inhibitor compounds to complement, BTA585, our fusion inhibitor currently in a Phase 2a clinical trial," said Joseph M. Patti, president and chief executive officer of Aviragen Therapeutics. "This collaboration with the innovative team at GSURF will add to Aviragen's growing portfolio of novel antivirals, focused on addressing respiratory infections with significant unmet clinical needs."

Provided by Georgia State University

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