

Eli Lilly offloads NASH candidates to Terns Pharma

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Eli Lilly has offloaded three small molecule therapeutic candidates for the potential treatment of non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) to Terns Pharmaceuticals for development and commercialization.

The agreement includes a clinical stage farnesoid X receptor (FXR) agonist, TERN-101, a semicarbazide-sensitive amine oxidase (SSAO) inhibitor, TERN-201, which is nearing IND submission, and a preclinical candidate that inhibits an undisclosed, well-validated NASH target. Terns Pharmaceuticals plans to focus initial development activities on regulatory approval in China and explore clinical development in additional global markets.

“We are excited about this agreement with Lilly, as it perfectly fits our strategy of bringing innovative therapeutics to underserved patients globally,” said Weidong Zhong, Ph.D., President and CEO of Terns. “The addition of these candidates to our current portfolio of discovery projects provides Terns with a fully integrated preclinical and clinical pipeline of products targeting both NASH and cancer. This also positions us well to investigate combination therapies early during clinical development to identify the best treatment regimens for NASH.”

“We are pleased to enter into this agreement with Terns Pharmaceuticals as we work to further our shared goal of making medicines to help people live longer, healthier, more active lives,” said Ruth Gimeno, Ph.D., Vice President, Diabetes Research and Clinical Investigation at Lilly. “We are committed to improving the lives of people affected with diabetes, and we view NASH as an important comorbidity and complication of diabetes. The experience of Terns in drug discovery and clinical development for liver disease in China will complement our internal research efforts and will be critical as these potential medicines are further developed in China and around the world.”

Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) is a severe form of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), which is caused by the accumulation of excess fat in the liver. Global rates of NAFLD and NASH are increasing rapidly, in tandem with rising rates of obesity. It is estimated that 15 percent of the Chinese adult population has NAFLD. Of those patients, an estimated 20

percent will develop NASH. There is currently no approved medication for the treatment of NASH.