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DFH, Hetero to develop HIV replication blockers

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Bangalore: DFH Pharma (DFH), a privately held pharmaceutical company focused on the development of HIV therapeutics, has entered into a research and product development agreement with hetero group, a privately held research-based global pharmaceutical group with headquarters in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India, to develop the next generation of HIV maturation inhibitor drugs.

Maturation inhibitors are a new class of HIV drug that blocks virus replication by interfering with the formation of infectious HIV virus. The clinical proof-of-concept for maturation inhibitors was established in HIV-infected patients with the first-in-class drug bevirimat. While bevirimat was shown to be safe, well-tolerated and effective in reducing virus in many patients, only limited effectiveness was observed in others. It was determined that this variable response to bevirimat was due to small changes in the makeup of a key viral structural protein in different HIV strains. The goal of the current effort is to identify maturation inhibitor drugs that are effective against all HIV strains, including those with the types of changes associated with reduced sensitivity to bevirimat.

The focus of the joint R&D effort is to expedite research into and the development of new maturation inhibitor drugs by combining DFH Pharma's background and experience in HIV therapeutic development with Hetero's world class expertise in product development, medicinal chemistry, manufacture of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and finished dosage forms.

"We are very excited to be working with Hetero, to develop the next generation of HIV maturation inhibitor drugs," said Dr Carl Wild, DFH Pharma president and CEO. "The partnership will provide DFH access to Hetero's world-class chemistry and product development capabilities allowing for the rapid return of maturation inhibitor drug candidates to the clinic."

Dr B P S Reddy, founder, chairman and managing director of Hetero, said that, "The collaboration with DFH will give a new paradigm to our discovery program(s). The DFH team's clinical expertise with HIV drugs will complement our drug discovery capabilities to expedite the development and enhance the success rate. This collaboration strengthens our commitment towards our work in the HIV therapeutic area."