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Singapore: Verastem, a biopharmaceutical company focused on discovering and developing drugs to treat breast and other cancers by targeting cancer stem cells, announced a research collaboration with Eisai for the next-generation of small molecule Wnt inhibitors. Verastem scientific co-founder and chair of the Scientific Advisory Board Dr Robert Weinberg published a report in 2011 in the journal Cell describing the critical nature of the Wnt pathway in the development and maintenance of cancer stem cells.

"Verastem and Eisai have a shared vision for the utility of Wnt inhibitors in the treatment of cancer," said Dr Jonathan Pachter, Verastem vice president and head of research. "Our Wnt inhibitor, VS-507, shows activity in multiple cancer stem cell models both in vitro and in human tumor xenografts. Through this collaboration with Eisai, a world leader in complex natural product chemistry, we can jointly leverage our unique capabilities to develop the next-generation of Wnt inhibitors for the targeted killing of cancer stem cells."

VS-507 is a proprietary formulation of salinomycin and will be the starting point for the development of proprietary analogs in the collaboration with Eisai. The resulting compounds will be tested in Verastem's Wnt signaling and cancer stem cell assays to evaluate their selective activity. Verastem will own the analogs that are generated in the 12-month collaboration. Eisai will

be eligible to receive royalties on commercial sales of identified products. During the term of the agreement, Eisai has a right of first negotiation for products that are created through the collaboration.

"With their particular expertise in natural product chemistry, Eisai is the perfect partner," said Mr Robert Forrester, chief operating officer, Verastem. "We believe Wnt signaling is a critical regulator of cancer stem cells, and a combined research effort to find novel inhibitors of this pathway is of great interest to both Eisai and Verastem."