



**Press Release**

**A Rainbow Seed Fund Investment**

02 January 2009

**Novacta Therapeutics Achieves First Milestone from the Wellcome Trust's Strategic Translational Award for a New Treatment for *C. difficile* Infection**

Rainbow Seed Fund investment Novacta Therapeutics, the anti-infectives development arm of Novacta Biotech, announces that it has successfully achieved the first milestone in a strategic translational award received from the Wellcome Trust to develop a new drug to treat *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) infections.

The achievement of this significant milestone triggers the second tranche of a £3.5 million award granted in January 2008. Novacta will enter the selected drug candidate NVB302 into formal preclinical development. The end goal is for Novacta to progress the programme to human clinical studies.

*C. difficile* infections (CDIs) are a growing and serious problem, associated with twice as many deaths in UK hospitals last year as MRSA. Cases of CDIs, which occur in the lower digestive tract, rose by 22 per cent in the past year and affected more than 15,500 people over 65 in the first quarter of 2007. New anti-infective drugs are needed to target *C. difficile* without depleting other beneficial bacteria in the gut.

Novacta is developing novel, naturally-derived products known as 'lantibiotics' as first-in-class drugs for treating hospital acquired infections caused by *C. difficile*. Early preclinical data indicate that the product shows promise as an effective treatment by acting selectively to kill *C. difficile* with less disturbance of normal gut bacteria than with existing drugs, predicting that the drug has a good recurrence prognosis. Recurrence of the disease is the central problem to any *C. difficile* anti-bacterial therapy. In addition, exploratory data have demonstrated that the drug is safe and well-tolerated.

Dr Tony Sedgwick, Novacta's Chief Executive Officer, commented, "This is a major step for Novacta, as it not only validates the company's platform of proprietary lantibiotic variants, but also allows us to fully fund the programme to the point of entering clinical trials. The early preclinical data have already shown the potential and safety of the programme and we look forward to progressing it into the clinic. With existing therapies being only suboptimal and only few developed compounds in the pipeline, Novacta is well positioned to be the first on the market with a novel and effective treatment against *C. difficile*."

Mark White of the Rainbow Seed Fund commented: "We are very pleased that Novacta Therapeutics has achieved this milestone and we are optimistic that they will be able to develop an effective treatment for *C. difficile* infections. This achievement demonstrates the high quality work which has been done by Novacta. Rainbow Seed Fund is delighted to be associated with such an innovative Company."

-ends-

**For further information contact:**

**Novacta Therapeutics**  
Dr Tony Sedgwick

Tel: + 44 (0) 7785 290 408

**Rainbow Seed Fund**  
Mark White

Tel: +44 (0) 7984 793 814

**Financial Dynamics**  
Juliet Clarke / Erwan Gouraud

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7831 3113



### **About Novacta Therapeutics**

Novacta Therapeutics is the newly formed anti-infectives development arm of UK-based biotechnology company Novacta Biotech.

Novacta Therapeutic's lead programmes are centred around a novel class of small peptide molecules called lantibiotics, which have until now been underexploited due to the lack of adequate research tools. Novacta has three programmes based around first-in-class optimised lantibiotic variants. Its novel approach has been validated by the Wellcome Trust's strategic translational award for its lead programme in *C.difficile* associated infection.

Novacta Biotech's other arm, known as Novacta Biosystems, is focused on providing revenue generating services to industry customers. Novacta was established in 2003 and currently employs about 25 people at its premises in Welwyn, Hertfordshire. For more information, go to [www.novactabio.com](http://www.novactabio.com).

### **About lantibiotics**

Lantibiotics are a naturally occurring class of antibiotic peptide compounds found in a large number of bacteria. They take their name from the lanthionine amino acids found within their structure (lanthionine-containing antibiotics). Lantibiotics have demonstrated potential to treat infections caused by agents such as *C. difficile* and MRSA. Conventional medicinal chemistry has been unable to manipulate the structure of the naturally occurring compounds into the optimised forms that have the potential to treat human disease. However, Novacta's proprietary technologies allow the structural manipulation and optimisation of activity which is necessary to unlock the potential of this novel and under-exploited class of compounds.

### **About The Wellcome Trust**

The Wellcome Trust is the largest charity in the UK. It funds innovative biomedical research, in the UK and internationally, spending around £600 million each year to support the brightest scientists with the best ideas. The Wellcome Trust supports public debate about biomedical research and its impact on health and wellbeing.

[www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk)

### **About Rainbow Seed Fund:**

The £8.5m Rainbow Seed Fund was established in 2001 with funding from the Office of Science and Innovation to commercialise scientific research in a leading group of the UK publicly funded institutions, our partners. The Fund made its first investment in 2002 and has increased its partner base twice, in 2004 with the addition of BBSRC and in 2006 when 6 other leading research institutes joined the Fund.

The Fund invests at the earliest stages of a technology's development, and helps to turn an idea into a business by supporting the management of the business and facilitating investment. Rainbow's partners spend over £1 billion on research and development every year giving the Fund privileged access to high quality investment propositions at the earliest stage.

Our close involvement at this level means that we are in a key position to identify the products with a commercial future and play an active role in the successful development of these technologies into products and businesses.