



## **Accelerator Corporation Announces \$7M Series A Investment in ApoGen Biotechnologies to Develop a New Class of Drugs Targeting Resistance to Cancer Therapy**

*Third Accelerator Corporation-Backed Startup Launched in 2016*

**SEATTLE, WA – December 12, 2016** – [Accelerator Corporation](#), a leading life science investment and management firm, today announced an investment in ApoGen Biotechnologies, Inc., a company developing a new class of drugs that target the underlying mechanisms that cause genomic mutations to interrupt the development of drug resistance by cancer cells. The investors participating in the \$7 million Series A financing include AbbVie Ventures, Alexandria Venture Investments, ARCH Venture Partners, Eli Lilly and Company, Johnson & Johnson Innovation – JJDC, Inc., Watson Fund, L.P., WRF Capital and WuXi PharmaTech.

“One of the great challenges in treating cancer is that it evolves over time and develops resistance to therapy,” said Thong Q. Le, chief executive officer of Accelerator. “ApoGen’s drug discovery and development efforts are focused on the development of highly selective and potent small molecule inhibitors that aim to slow or stop cancer mutation and the development of drug resistance. The company is also working to develop companion diagnostics to identify the patients likely to get the most benefit from these therapies. We are excited to invest Accelerator’s unique startup resources to potentially develop these promising technologies for cancer patients in need.”

ApoGen’s scientific approach is based on discoveries made at the University of Minnesota (U of M). The company’s founders include two researchers at the U of M and an experienced life science serial entrepreneur:

- Reuben S. Harris, Ph.D., investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI); professor of biochemistry, molecular biology and biophysics at the U of M; associate director of the U of M’s Institute for Molecular Virology
- Daniel A. Harki, Ph.D., associate professor of medicinal chemistry at the U of M
- John T. Santini, Jr., Ph.D., president and CEO of Vergent Bioscience, a protease-focused biotech company located in Minneapolis, Minn.; co-founder of MicroCHIPS, Inc.; former CEO of four life science companies. Dr. Santini will serve as a member of ApoGen’s board of directors.

ApoGen will initially focus its drug development efforts on an antiviral component of the human innate immune system – the APOBEC cytidine deaminases – which have been implicated as a prominent source of mutations in cancers. Dr. Harris, along with his colleagues at the U of M, have observed that mutations induced by APOBEC occur throughout the genome in many tumorous cells. By targeting this mechanism, ApoGen hopes to interrupt a cancer cell’s ability to develop drug therapy resistance. ApoGen has obtained a worldwide, exclusive license from the U of M related to a portfolio of APOBEC technologies developed by Drs. Harris and Harki.

ApoGen’s scientific advisory board is comprised of a highly respected panel of world-class investigators in the areas of chemical biology, cancer genomics, drug development and clinical research:

- José Baselga, M.D., Ph.D., physician-in-chief at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC); professor of medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College
- Peter B. Dervan, Ph.D., Bren Professor of Chemistry at California Institute of Technology
- Charles Swanton, M.D., Ph.D., senior clinical research fellow and group leader, Translational Cancer Therapeutics, Francis Crick Institute; chief investigator, CRUK TRACERx study; co-director, CRUK Lung Cancer Centre of Excellence and Thoracic Medical Oncologist at UCL Hospitals
- Douglas Yee, M.D., director, Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota; professor, departments of Medicine and Pharmacology, University of Minnesota

“I have been working with Drs. Harris and Harki to move ApoGen’s science toward clinical and commercial development, and I am thrilled to now partner with Accelerator Corporation,” said Dr. Santini. “We believe that we have assembled the ideal team to advance our therapeutic technologies to slow or stop tumor evolution, which has the potential to yield a significant clinical impact for cancer patients.”

#### **About ApoGen Biotechnologies**

ApoGen Biotechnologies, Inc. is a biotechnology company focused on the development of a new class of therapeutics targeting drivers of cancer genomic mutation. ApoGen is building upon technologies developed at the University of Minnesota to develop drugs that block a key pathway that causes drug resistance. ApoGen’s drug discovery and development efforts are directed toward highly selective and potent small molecule inhibitors of the APOBEC family of enzymes, which are DNA cytosine deaminases and an important endogenous source of DNA mutation in cancer. For more information, visit [www.apogenbiotech.com](http://www.apogenbiotech.com).

#### **About Accelerator Corporation**

Accelerator Corporation, established in 2003, is a biotechnology investment and management company with operations in Seattle and New York City. Formed by a syndicate of top-tier venture capital investors and the Institute for Systems Biology, Accelerator identifies, evaluates, finances and manages the development of emerging biotechnology opportunities. Accelerator has built a unique solution that addresses many of the key problems associated with investing in early-stage biotechnology by providing access to venture capital, management, scientific expertise and facilities.

Since its inception, Accelerator has raised more than \$100 million in capital commitments to invest in innovative early stage life science companies. Accelerator has assembled a team of talented professionals with deep investment, operational and scientific expertise to build high-quality life science startup companies and will continue to seek out the most exciting and potentially valuable emerging biotechnologies. Earlier this year, Accelerator announced the launch of Petra Pharma Corporation with \$48 million in Series A financing commitments and Lodo Therapeutics with \$17 million in Series A financing commitments. Both companies were formed from early-stage research originally developed by two of its New York City institution partners.

#### **Contact:**

Dan Budwick  
Pure Communications, Inc.  
973-271-6085  
[dan@purecommunicationsinc.com](mailto:dan@purecommunicationsinc.com)