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Hebrew U.'s Yissum teams with Neocrine Biosciences

Neocrine Biosciences Inc. will develop valnoctamide, which has potential for treating neurological and psychiatric disorders discovered at Hebrew University.

Gali Weinreb — 1 Aug 07 10:42

[Yissum Technology Transfer Company of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) has signed a worldwide licensing agreement for the development of valnoctamide stereoisomers with [Neocrine Biosciences Inc.](#) (Nasdaq:NBIX). Valnoctamide and its individual stereoisomers have been shown to be active in a number of preclinical models and have the potential to treat epilepsy, bipolar disease and neuropathic pain. The parent compound is a uniform combination of four valnoctamide stereoisomers, which has been marketed as an anxiolytic in several European countries.

The companies did not disclose the size of the deal, but Yissum's similar agreement with Shire Pharmaceuticals Group plc (LSE:SHP; Nasdaq:SHPGY; TSX:SHQ) is worth up to \$10 million, subject to meeting milestones, plus royalties on potential sales.

The clinical development of one of the stereoisomers of valnoctamide is intended to offer patients suffering from neurological and psychiatric disorders, a safer and potentially more efficacious treatment option. Neurocrine intends to initiate clinical studies after submission of an investigational new drug (IND) application to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the first half of 2008.

Dr. Meir Bialer and Dr. Boris Yagen of Hebrew University's School of Pharmacology have guided the discovery of the chemical and biological properties of valnoctamide and its individual stereoisomers. Bialer said, "Due to its side effects, the use of valproate is restricted in women of child bearing age and in children. The development of valnoctamide stereoisomers may provide more efficacious and safer CNS drugs and a suitable answer for these clinical needs across all patient types."

According to IMS Health, sales of valproate derived branded and generic products exceeded \$1.5 billion in the US alone for 2006. Neocrine cites reports that the potential market for the drugs could exceed \$15 billion for treating more than 50 million patients worldwide for neurological and psychiatric disorders, including epilepsy, migraine pain, neuropathic pain, and bipolar disorder.

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