

## V-Bio invests into ExeVir Bio to accelerate development of new treatment conferring broad protection against Covid-19

**Belgium, July 28th, 2020:** Today V-Bio Ventures announces its investment in a EUR 23 million Series A financing into ExeVir Bio. The round was led by Fund+, with the participation, next to V-Bio Ventures, of VIB, UCB Ventures, SFPI-FPIM, and several Belgian family offices. ExeVir Bio has been established by Belgian partners combining world class science, antibody engineering, manufacturing, blue-chip venture capital investment and Flemish Government financing, which have joined forces in a unique collaboration to boost the development of new therapies to combat Covid-19.

ExeVir Bio, a spin-out of VIB, the world-leading Belgium-based life sciences research institute, is harnessing its Llama-derived antibody (VHH) technology platform to generate robust antiviral therapies providing broad protection against coronaviruses. After early pre-financing by the Flemish Government, UCB, a multinational biopharmaceutical company, assisted in the generation of the lead candidate and is producing the GMP batches for clinical trials. Fund+, a leading Life Sciences-focused investment firm in Belgium, led the financing and was instrumental in setting up ExeVir Bio.

ExeVir Bio is using a highly innovative and clinically validated VHH technology to develop treatments for viral infections that may pose a significant global threat. Lead asset VHH72-Fc binds to a unique epitope that is conserved in SARS-CoV-1 and SARS-CoV-2 viruses and this binding prevents these viruses from entering the cell. The importance of this approach is that it could be used both as a therapeutic and prophylactic. Therapeutic use could help slow viral replication in the lungs, reduce inflammation, and give patients valuable time to raise their own productive immune response. Prophylactic use could support the ringfencing of an outbreak, protect healthcare workers, and support those at increased risk of severe illness from Covid-19.

**Torsten Mummenbrauer, CEO of ExeVir Bio, said:** “We are committed to the international effort against Covid-19 to support healthcare systems and to offer global access to our new treatment. With this Series A financing we can rapidly advance the development of our lead compound into clinical studies by the end of the year. We are confident our Llama-derived antibodies hold a key to saving the lives of patients who can become seriously ill with coronavirus.”

The technology platform was developed by VIB-UGent scientists, Professors Xavier Saelens and Nico Callewaert with the help of VIB’s drug discovery team at VIB Discovery Sciences, and national and international scientific collaborators. The team has shown that Llama-derived single-domain antibodies can neutralize SARS-CoV-2 in preclinical studies and SARS-CoV-1 in *in vitro* assays. As Llama antibodies are smaller than human antibodies, they can attach to parts of the coronavirus that would otherwise be inaccessible. The antibodies were derived from a Llama called ‘Winter’. A paper on the platform was published on 28 May 2020 in the journal *Cell*, on ‘*Structural Basis for Potent Neutralization of Betacoronaviruses by Single-Domain Camelid Antibodies*’ by Wrapp et al. [https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674\(20\)30494-3](https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674(20)30494-3).

Torsten Mummenbrauer, CEO of ExeVir Bio, Philippe Monteyne, Partner at Fund+, Erica Whittaker, Head of UCB Ventures, Jérôme Van Biervliet, Managing Director, VIB and Katja Rosenkranz, Partner

at V-Bio (observer) will join the Board of ExeVir Bio. Further board appointments will be announced in the future.

**-ENDS-**

## **Contacts**

### **ExeVir Bio**

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### **About ExeVir Bio**

ExeVir Bio is harnessing its VHH technology platform to generate robust antiviral therapies providing broad protection against viral infections, including coronaviruses. It is a spin out from VIB, the world class Belgium-based life sciences research institute, based on the work of Professor Drs Xavier Saelens and Nico Callewaert from VIB in collaboration with: Laboratory of Jason McLellan – University of Texas at Austin; Laboratory of Barney Graham – NIAID (Vaccine Research Center); Laboratory of Johan Neyts – KU Leuven (Rega Institute). ExeVir Bio is led by a team of experts that combines international biotech and pharma experience with a successful track record of developing and bringing products to market. It is backed by blue chip investors led by Fund+, VIB, UCB Ventures, FPIM, V-Bio and several Belgian Family Offices.

### **About V-Bio Ventures**

V-Bio Ventures ([www.v-bio.ventures](http://www.v-bio.ventures)) is an independent venture capital firm specialized in building and financing young, innovative life science companies. V-Bio Ventures was established in 2015 and works closely with Belgium-based VIB, one of the world's premier life science institutes. The fund invests throughout Europe in start-up and early-stage companies with high growth potential focusing on technologies that provide transformational improvements in the biopharmaceutical, pharmaceutical, diagnostics and agricultural sectors.