

Johnson & Johnson to acquire Novira Therapeutic

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Johnson & Johnson has announced a definitive agreement to acquire Novira Therapeutics, a privately held, clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company developing novel therapies for curative treatment of chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection. The acquisition includes Novira's portfolio of novel antivirals, including its lead candidate, NVR 3-778. Financial terms of the transaction have not been disclosed.

NVR 3-778 is a small molecule, direct acting antiviral, for oral administration in patients with HBV that inhibits the HBV core or capsid protein. HBV core is a novel and promising drug target since it is involved in multiple activities required for viral replication and persistence.

"We are excited about the prospect this acquisition offers to accelerate the development of curative treatments for people affected by chronic hepatitis B," said Dr William N Hait, global head, R&D, Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson. "NVR 3-778 offers the potential for efficient suppression of virus production and replication, which could help address the remaining unmet medical needs."

The closing is subject to clearance under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act and other customary closing conditions. The transaction is expected to close during the fourth quarter of 2015.

"Chronic Hepatitis B is a potentially fatal liver disease with approximately 60 percent of hepatocellular carcinoma attributed to infection with the Hepatitis B virus," said Dr Lawrence Blatt, global head, Infectious Diseases and Vaccines, Janssen and chief executive officer, Alios Biopharma, part of the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies. "With more than 350 million people affected worldwide we seek to overcome treatment challenges, such as the requirement for people to endure lifelong therapy, through scientific innovation. Combining Novira's recent breakthroughs with our vast experience in viral diseases we endeavor to deliver novel medicines for patients suffering from this insidious disease".

