

UM brain disorder research moves toward clinical testing

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University of Montana is one step closer to turning a discovery into a drug. Promentis Pharmaceuticals, Inc. recently announced it will enter an exclusive agreement with UM to commercialize a discovery made by a team of UM faculty scientists that has the potential to treat brain cancer and possibly other disorders of the central nervous system.

The team, which is based in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences within UM's Skagg's School of Pharmacy, includes professors Richard Bridges, Sarjubhai Patel, Nicjholas Natale, Philippe Diaz and Charles Thompson.

Their studies primarily focus on [transporter proteins](#) found on cells in the brain and spinal cord. Bridges likens transporters to turnstiles, controlling which [small molecules](#) get in and out of the different cells. His team works to discover molecules that regulate activity of these transporters. In short, they seek to understand how alterations in transporters may contribute to central [nervous system](#) diseases and to develop drugs that will compensate for such changes.

The UM team's patented research shows promise for treating various disorders of the brain. Equipped with expertise and resources not available at UM, Promentis Pharmaceuticals will advance the patented research to a clinical setting.

"Universities are great places for discovering innovations or breakthroughs that change our lives," UM Director of Technology Transfer Joe Fanguy said. "We aren't always equipped to transform those discoveries into real-world applications. In this case, UM has entered an exclusive agreement to take the research to the next level - developing novel drugs for the marketplace."

This project represents one of several that have

been initiated within the UM's Center for Structural & Functional Neuroscience and the Skaggs School of Pharmacy with support from the Montana Board of Research and Commercialization Technology.

The goal of the CSFN/MBRCT is to facilitate the commercialization of research discoveries made on campus, particularly related to drugs and diagnostics for the treatment of neurodegenerative disorders and neurological diseases.

"It was great news to hear about the agreement between UM and Promentis," MBRCT Executive Director Dave Desch said. "The board began supporting projects with UM's Center for Structural & Functional Neuroscience more than a dozen years ago knowing that commercialization of any technologies developed would be years down the road. The agreement is just another example of the series of successes generated by Dr. Bridges and his team."

Through the funding of pilot projects, MBRCT's support allows UM faculty to generate preliminary results and file provisional patents critical to either establishing a private-sector partnership or starting their own spin-off company.

"These projects provide a pathway to protect intellectual property, collaborate with companies, advance our discoveries into patient care and have an economic impact in a way that we could never do by ourselves," Bridges said. "The added value, of course, is that students are involved every step of the way."

"This agreement represents a significant milestone in what has been a very productive, ongoing collaboration between Promentis and the University of Montana," Promentis Pharmaceuticals CEO and President Chad Beyer said. "This arrangement underscores our passion for developing novel drugs and our commitment to bring them closer to patients."

Promentis Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is a privately held pharmaceutical company focused on developing compounds aimed at modifying brain chemistry for the treatment of schizophrenia and other devastating [central nervous system](#) disorders.

"We look forward to continuing our longstanding relationship with a world-class team of medicinal chemists and molecular pharmacologists within UM's Skaggs School of Pharmacy," Beyer said.

Provided by University of Montana

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