



Metrion Biosciences awarded £637k funding under Innovate UK Biomedical Catalyst Primer Award for ion channel drug discovery

- **Funding will support project aiming to identify novel oral therapeutics for the auto-immune disease psoriasis**
- **Adds to Innovate UK funding awarded in February 2018 for research on potassium channel inhibitors**

Cambridge, UK, 28 August 2018: Metrion Biosciences Limited ("Metrion"), the specialist ion channel contract research and drug discovery company, today announced it has been awarded £637k funding under the Innovate UK Biomedical Catalyst Primer Award scheme. The funding will be used to support further research on orally available potassium channel inhibitors for treatment of psoriasis, a common auto-immune disease for which improved treatments are much needed.

The project will commence in September 2018, and will focus on the further optimisation of a set of key compounds, and their characterisation in disease relevant models. The compounds are taken from the portfolio acquired by Metrion in January this year of more than 2,000 small molecule inhibitors of a voltage-gated potassium channel known to be involved in the development of auto-immune disease. Metrion has already confirmed the potent *in vitro* activity of the selected key compounds, and has filed a new patent application covering a series of these active drug leads.

If successful, the project may lead to the selection of one or more novel oral drug candidates suitable for development as potential new therapeutics for the treatment of psoriasis and other auto-immune disorders. The cost of biologics for treatment of a patient with moderate-severe psoriasis is approximately \$70K per year, and the global psoriasis drugs market is expected to be valued at \$13 billion by 2024 with a CAGR of 7.26% (GlobalData, 2016). A novel efficacious oral drug at a cost effective price-point has the potential to profoundly reduce healthcare costs.

Dr Keith McCullagh, Chairman, Metrion Biosciences, said: "As well as being a specialist ion channel contract research organisation, Metrion also has valuable intellectual property in the potassium channel field which we are keen to see commercialised. The funding received from Innovate UK will enable us to determine the potential value of this novel therapeutic approach to auto-immune conditions. If

successful, we will seek appropriate industry partners to fund further development and commercialisation."

Alongside this project, Metrion is also conducting research with its compounds in other auto-immune conditions, partially funded by an Innovate UK Biomedical Catalyst Feasibility Award, announced in February.

- Ends -

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About psoriasis

Psoriasis is a long-lasting autoimmune disease which affects >100 million people worldwide, and is characterised by patches of abnormal skin, which are typically red, dry, itchy, and scaly. In 2013, direct costs for psoriasis ranged from \$51.7-\$63.2 billion, indirect costs ranged from \$23.9-\$35.4 billion, and medical comorbidities contributed \$36.4 billion annually in the US. However, there is a low level of satisfaction with existing treatment standards, with 57% of oral and 45% of biologic therapy recipients discontinuing therapy for reasons of safety/tolerability or lack/loss of efficacy. Healthcare professionals are often cautious to initiate or maintain therapy due to these concerns which are exacerbated by the high costs of current biologics. For these reasons, the availability of more cost-effective and safe first-line therapeutics for treatment of psoriasis is a significant medical need.

About Metrion Biosciences

Metrion Biosciences is a specialist ion-channel contract research organisation and drug discovery business. The Company provides customers with access to a range of high quality ion channel assays on a fee-for-service or collaboration basis. Metrion Biosciences' specialist ion channel expertise includes an industry leading panel of *in vitro* cardiac ion channel safety assays, translational native cell and phenotypic assays for neurological and cardiotoxicity testing, and a range of other ion channel screening services such as cell line development and optimisation. Metrion Biosciences is able to provide tailored assay formats, data analysis and reporting

solutions, effective project management and quality assured data packages. For more information, see: www.metribiosciences.com

About Innovate UK

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