Summary

For Aptinyx’s debut announcement, the communications team aimed to raise awareness through a select blend of media outlets that would reach specific target audiences: the investment community, business development contacts and the local Chicago region. We prioritized outlets that would tell the company’s new story with an emphasis on key points without requiring too many details about the financing and the pipeline. We secured coverage under embargo in all five of our top targets that reached the target audiences – Chicago Tribune, FierceBiotech, BioWorld Today, Scrip and Dow Jones VentureWire. In addition, we secured coverage from BioCentury, Chicagolnno and MedCity News. The stories published communicated the excitement around Aptinyx – drawing on the past success of Naurex while giving the company its own identity and painting a bright picture for the path forward. Key messages about the strength of the future pipeline and team were communicated throughout all stories. Nearly all of the covering outlets also tweeted links to their articles – amplifying our reach and the awareness of Aptinyx’s launch.

Coverage

- Chicago Tribune
- FierceBiotech
- BioWorld Today
- Scrip
- Dow Jones VentureWire
- MedCity News
- Chicagolnno
- BioCentury
- Notable Tweets
Evanston-based Naurex has launched a spinout company, Aptinyx, which it says will identify promising molecules for new treatments.

Led by Naurex CEO Dr. Norbert Riedel, Aptinyx will work with molecules that modulate the brain’s N-methyl-D-aspartate, or NMDA, receptor to treat brain and nervous system disorders.

In July, Dublin-based Allergan announced it would acquire Naurex for $560 million, with the potential for Naurex to receive additional research and development “success-based and sales-threshold milestone payments.” The deal closed Aug. 31, Riedel said.

Aptinyx announced its launch late Tuesday.

To identify promising molecules, Aptinyx will use Naurex’s discovery platform and preclinical pipeline of drugs, the company said.

“This is not a single-trick pony,” Riedel previously told Blue Sky. “It’s a pipeline of molecules that all work in the same mechanism of modulating the NMDA reception and thereby makes for one of the strongest pipelines in the country — and probably globally.”

The drugs that Allergan acquired in the Naurex acquisition, GLYX-13 and NRX-1074, focused on the treatment of depression.

Riedel said the new company is considering drugs for other conditions with unmet need, including post-traumatic stress disorder, epilepsy and neuropathic pain. Though he says Aptinyx has some “wonderful choices,” the company likely won’t identify its first drug until May or June.

In addition to its own pipeline of drugs, Aptinyx will have a “research collaboration” with Allergan, meaning the companies will work together to discover and develop NMDA receptor modulators. Allergan has the right to license a select number of those drugs, a news release from Aptinyx said.

Riedel said the new company received seed funding from shareholders to operate for the first several months, after which it plans to raise a Series A round. The team of nearly 50 largely consists of former employees.

“This is very much a proven team, a proven technology, a very successful transaction and an attractive early-stage pipeline to move the company forward,” he told Blue Sky on Tuesday.
After a $560M Allergan buyout, Naurex vets regroup for CNS R&D

By Damian Garde
September 16, 2015

The brains behind Naurex, a drug developer acquired by Allergan ($AGN) for $560 million up front, have put the band back together, starting a new biotech with their old company's technology and setting their sights on central nervous system disorders.

The new operation, Aptinyx, is spinning out of Naurex with much of its management team in tow, reuniting founders with the discovery platform behind the depression drug that first caught Allergan's eye. Aptinyx is getting started with some early-stage oral treatments that modulate the brain's NMDA receptors, a pathway the company believes has wide potential beyond GLYX-13, Allergan's new late-stage antidepressant.

Under the terms of its spinout, Aptinyx is collaborating with Allergan on the discovery and preclinical development of some NMDA modulators for undisclosed psychiatric and neurologic disorders, and the Big Pharma has the right to in-license those as they progress. But the new company retains full rights to everything outside that umbrella, and Aptinyx is working through early-stage studies in traumatic brain injury, neuropathic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder and epilepsy.

The arrangement, Aptinyx CEO Norbert Riedel said, makes use of each party's strengths. Allergan, a multinational giant, is well suited to take GLYX-13 through Phase III development, regulatory review and commercialization. But the company, under CEO Brent Saunders, has made no secret of its aversion to early drug development, preferring to leave that work to biotech and academia in favor of stepping in after the proof-of-concept stage. And Aptinyx is happy to fill that role in NMDA modulation, Riedel said.

As for the company's proprietary assets, Aptinyx is in the preclinical stage with a handful of assets and expects to identify its first disease targets in the coming months. If everything goes according to plan, the company should be ready to start its first clinical trial in summer 2016, Riedel said.

Aptinyx rallied some of Naurex's investors to raise seed money for its preclinical projects, but the biotech plans to put together a Series A financing round in the coming months to fund its clinical aspirations, he said.

Riedel, who served as CEO of Naurex, said his old company negotiated what would become Aptinyx into the Allergan buyout deal "to maintain the truly enormous value that remained in the early stage pipeline and our proprietary platform."

Link
Top
Aptinyx Inc., a spinout of Allergan plc-acquired Naurex Inc., has picked up a substantial seed round intended to help it develop a pipeline of preclinical N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor modulators. The early stage programs have the potential to address a number of challenging nervous system disorders, including traumatic brain injury, neuropathic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder and epilepsy.

Though undisclosed in size, the larger-than-average financing drew in a number of former Naurex backers and new investors, no doubt convinced of the potential for NMDA modulation following earlier validation of Naurex's lead programs and the Allergan deal's $560 million up-front fee plus milestones. Part of the proceeds of that deal went on to establish Aptinyx's initial operating budget.

Plans for the spinout were negotiated with Allergan as part of the Naurex acquisition, with an eye to both avoiding an under-valuation of Naurex's early stage assets and as a path to de-risking the deal by concentrating its focus on Naurex's better-characterized programs, rapastinel (GLYX-13) and NRX-1074. (See BioWorld Today, Dec. 4, 2014, and July 28, 2015.)

Led by former Naurex chief Norbert Riedel, and maintaining much of the key talent behind that company, Evanston, Ill.-based Aptinyx is adding H. Lundbeck A/S veteran Torsten Madsen as the company's new chief medical officer. The company hopes to advance its first candidate into phase I trials as early as next summer.

"We now have the opportunity to advance a next-generation molecule into the clinic and do what Naurex did really, really well, and what Aptinyx can do well," Riedel told BioWorld Today, "namely design, synthesize and characterize molecules preclinically, and then validate them in earlier-stage clinical studies, which is really our core area of strength."

Aptinyx has yet to decide which indications it will focus on, but it will likely target two or three specific areas initially, he said. Those will likely come into greater focus as the company prepares to pursue a series A round financing within the next six to eight months.

Despite pursuing its own programs independently, Aptinyx will also collaborate with Allergan on the discovery and preclinical development of a select number of orally bioavailable, small-molecule NMDA receptor modulators for the treatment of certain psychiatric and neurologic disorders. Under terms of that agreement, Allergan receives the right to in-license any covered compounds discovered and profiled during the term of the collaboration for certain target indications, walled off from indications Aptinyx expects to pursue for itself. The collaboration could last up to five years, but also may be shorter if Allergan exercises its options earlier.

Aptinyx's therapeutics are designed to enhance synaptic plasticity, or strengthen the network for neural cell communication, a pathway that underlies multiple nervous system conditions. Its molecules can either promiscuously or selectively bind certain NMDA receptor subunits implicated in target diseases. The platform from which they're derived was developed based on research from the laboratory of Joseph Moskal, a professor
of biomedical engineering at Northwestern University, director of the university's Falk Center for Molecular Therapeutics, founder of Naurex, and now chief scientific officer of Aptinyx.
Scrip

Naurex Spinout Aptinyx Launches After Allergan Deal

By Mandy Jackson
September 16, 2015

Work did not slow down at Naurex after its acquisition by Allergan for $560m up front – a return of at least 3.4 times the $163m in venture capital invested in the company – since the underlying technology platform was spun out in a new firm, which launched on Sept. 16 as Aptinyx.

Aptinyx retained the entire Naurex management team and staff, including president and CEO Norbert Riedel, who told Scrip that Naurex's investors provided seed funding to support Aptinyx until the new company is able to close a Series A venture capital financing round. Riedel said the company's new and forthcoming capital will fund development of drugs that target the N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor, which may include the start of Phase I clinical trials for one or more candidates.

"Our priority now is to have a new molecule or several new molecules for clinical development. We have effective molecules that are being profiled and are ready to go into Phase I as early as next summer," he said. "We have yet to identify which indications we will go into first."

Allergan Relationship Continues

Allergan agreed to buy Naurex in July for $560m up front plus undisclosed milestone fees to gain access to the NMDA receptor modulators rapastinel (GLYX-13) and NRX-1074 for the treatment of depression in a deal that allowed Naurex to retain its discovery platform and preclinical programs for drugs that target the NMDA receptor for the treatment of brain and nervous system disorders.

The deal also gave Allergan a first right to consider licensing an undisclosed number of new drug candidates discovered by Aptinyx, including additional NMDA receptor modulators for depression.

The agreement does not limit Aptinyx's ability to discover and develop orally-available small molecules outside of depression. Potential neurologic and psychiatric indications include traumatic brain injury, neuropathic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder and epilepsy.

"Depression will no longer be a focus for Aptinyx," Riedel said. "Both sides have freedom to operate in numerous indications."

The Aptinyx platform is based on research from the laboratory of Naurex-co-founder and Aptinyx chief scientific officer Joseph Moskal, who is biomedical engineering professor at Northwestern University and director of the university's Falk Center for Molecular Therapeutics.

The platform enables the discovery of small molecules that are designed to enhance synaptic plasticity, or strengthen the network for neural cell communication underlying multiple nervous system conditions. Aptinyx drug candidates modulate rather than shut down NMDA receptors to treat brain disorders without the euphoria and hallucinations associated with the well-known NMDA receptor antagonist ketamine.
Naurex's rapastinel injections and oral NRX-1074 showed significant efficacy in Phase IIb and Phase II depression clinical trials.

Naurex raised $163m in three venture capital funding rounds, including an $80m Series C financing, prior to the Allergan transaction. Fortunately for the Naurex spinout company, Aptinyx is entering the market for venture capital at a time when VC investment in biotechnology firms is booming.
Venture investors in Naurex Inc., a neurological-disease drug-developer acquired by Allergan PLC in August, are backing Aptinyx Inc., a Naurex spinout formed to advance treatments for conditions such as traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Allergan agreed to pay $560 million to acquire Naurex. The deal gave it access to the startup's fast-acting antidepressant drug candidates, Glyx-13 and NRX-1074. These products modulate NMDA receptors. Since NMDA-receptor modulation could also apply to many other neurological diseases, Naurex backers resolved to retain Naurex's early-stage assets and platform technology instead of including them in the sale.

This syndicate, which included Adams Street Partners, EcoR1 Capital, Goudy Park Capital, LVP Life Science Ventures, PathoCapital, Sabby Capital, Takeda Ventures and others, are supporting Aptinyx with an undisclosed amount of seed financing. In addition to traumatic brain injury and PTSD, Aptinyx is looking at epilepsy and neuropathic pain as potential indications to pursue through NMDA-receptor modulators. Aptinyx, based in Evanston, Ill., hasn't settled on which indication it will target first, according to Chief Executive Norbert Riedel, who was also CEO of Naurex.

Venture firms have used this spinout strategy with other companies recently. Flexus Biosciences Inc., a cancer-drug developer acquired by Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. in March, spun off a new company to advance assets that weren't included in the Bristol-Myers sale. Last year Roche Holding Ltd. acquired Seragon Pharmaceuticals Inc., which was a spinout from another venture-backed startup, Aragon Pharmaceuticals Inc. Johnson & Johnson acquired Aragon in 2013.

While Allergan didn't obtain all of Naurex's assets, it does have an option to license certain Aptinyx compounds through a research collaboration established through the Naurex merger negotiations. These compounds would be in indications outside of the ones that Aptinyx is considering for its own drug development: traumatic brain injury, PTSD, epilepsy and neuropathic pain, Dr. Riedel said. The likely indications that would interest Allergan are psychiatric diseases and Alzheimer's disease, he said.

Aptinyx's therapeutics are designed to strengthen the network of neural cell communication through NMDA-receptor modulation. The platform was developed based on research from the laboratory of Northwestern University professor Joseph Moskal. Dr. Moskal is also founder of Naurex and chief scientific officer of Aptinyx.

Interest in this and other new approaches to neurological drug development has driven up investment in the field. Venture investment in treatments for brain disorders reached $1.01 billion in the first half, or nearly as much as the $1.10 billion deployed for the year in 2014, according to industry tracker VentureSource. The Aptinyx board includes Wilbur Gantz III, president of PathoCapital, Adams Street Partner Terry Gould, Baxalta Ventures Managing Partner Geeta Vemuri, LVP Partner Kenneth Widder and Dr. Riedel.
MedCity News
Fresh off its $560M acquisition, the team behind Naurex is launching a new startup

By Meghana Keshavan
September 16, 2015

The team behind psychiatric drug-maker Naurex is launching a new startup, fresh on the heels of getting acquired in August by Allergan for $560 million.

The Chicago startup, called Aptinyx, will be built on the discovery platform and preclinical pipeline developed by Naurex. The new company, much like Naurex, will be developing drugs for both psychiatric and neurological disorders, based on the concept of advancing small molecule drugs that work as modulators of the NMDA receptor. It plans to target a number of nervous system disorders, including traumatic brain injury, neuropathic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder and epilepsy, it said in a statement.

The company has “significant seed financing,” as well as a “high-potential research collaboration with Allergan,” Aptinyx president and CEO (and former Naurex top executive) Norbert Riedel said in the statement.

Aptinyx has already begun IND-enabling studies for its line of therapeutics that are meant to improve synaptic plasticity – strengthening the neural cell communication network. This class of drugs is being broadly studied for its potential to improve neurological or psychiatric conditions.

The startup will work with Allergan from the outset to develop these new drugs. Allergan has the right to in-license a certain number of the compounds that are discovered during their partnership.
ChicagoInno
Former Naurex Team Launches Spin Out BioPharma Company Aptinyx

By Karis Hustad
September 16, 2015

The researchers behind a depression-treating drug that has been shown to decrease symptoms of depression in just a few hours have spun off a new biopharma company to bring their drug discovery method to other brain and nervous system disorders.

In July Dublin-based pharmaceutical company Allergan acquired Evanston-based Naurex, with the agreement that Naurex researchers would spin off a new company to continue research as Allergan continued the commercialization process of their initial depressant drugs. On Tuesday, those researchers announced Aptinyx, a discovery platform aimed at developing pre-clinical brain and nervous disorder treatments.

“As we close the last chapter in the story of Naurex, we are excited to begin anew with Aptinyx and continue our work addressing unmet needs in central nervous system disorders,” said Norbert Riedel, president and CEO of Aptinyx in a release. “Our company launches with significant seed financing to support advancement of our preclinical development programs, an experienced and talented team, and a high-potential research collaboration with Allergan.”

Aptinyx will focus on the advancing modulators NMDA receptor, a key factor in their previous depression-treating drugs. They’ll expand their work out to research the effects on a larger range of brain and nervous system disorders, including traumatic brain injury, neuropathic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, and epilepsy. This work is based on the research of Joseph Moskal, a biomedical engineering professor at Northwestern University, who will now serve as the Chief Scientific Officer at Aptinyx.

“Throughout my research, I have seen that NMDA receptor modulators have great therapeutic potential in neurology and psychiatry and we confirmed this potential with the positive results that we saw with the Naurex clinical programs in depression,” said Dr. Moskal in the release. “At Aptinyx, our team will explore additional CNS indications with the next-generation of NMDA receptor modulators – developing our independent pipeline and collaborative research programs.”

"The research lends itself to a number of disorders in a compelling ways," Ashish Khanna, former vice president of corporate development at Naurex, now Chief Business Officer at Aptinyx told Chicago Inno in July. "[Future developments] will be led by the data and science rather than goals we pull out of thin air."

Aptinyx will be headquartered in Evanston, and will collaborate with Allergan on discovery and preclinical development. Allergan will have the right to in-license a select number of compounds, according to Aptinyx.
**BioCentury Extra**

**Former Naurex Team Launches Spin Out BioPharma Company Aptinyx**

A team of former Naurex Inc. executives have spun out the company's discovery platform and preclinical pipeline into Aptinyx Inc. (Evanston, Ill.), a newco focused on developing treatments for psychiatric and neurologic disorders.

Aptinyx President and CEO Norbert Riedel said all of Naurex's shareholders contributed an undisclosed amount of seed funding for Aptinyx as part of Naurex's acquisition by Allergan plc (NYSE:AGN) last month. Riedel was Naurex's CEO (see BioCentury Extra, July 27).

Riedel said Aptinyx plans to raise additional funds through a series A round over the next several months.

Aptinyx has a pipeline of oral small molecule NMDA receptor modulators to treat disorders including traumatic brain injury, neuropathic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder and epilepsy. The company will also collaborate with Allergan to discover and develop NMDA receptor modulators. Allergan has the right to in-license a select number of candidates. Financial terms of the collaboration were undisclosed.

The Aptinyx team includes CSO Joseph Moskal, formerly CSO at Naurex; and CBO Ashish Khanna, who was Naurex's VP of corporate development. Aptinyx also named Torsten Madsen CMO. Madsen was CMO and VP of U.S. drug development at H. Lundbeck A/S (CSE:LUN).
### Notable Tweets

**BioCentury @BioCentury**  
Former Naurex execs launch Aptinyx [http://t.co/VjoZH7bUh](http://t.co/VjoZH7bUh)

**Chicago Inno @Chicagoinno**  

**INVO @INVOatNU**  
NU startup Naurex(McC Prof. Moskal) launches spintout, Aptinyx: New company considers drugs for PTSD, epilepsy and more [http://fw.to/8YbXyzH](http://fw.to/8YbXyzH)

**Megan Graham @megancgraham**  

**BioWorld Today @BioWorld**  
Naurex spinout Aptinyx lands seed stage funding, $AGN partnership [http://bit.ly/1NwU7TX](http://bit.ly/1NwU7TX)

**MedCity News @medcitynews**  
#Naurex launched new #startup #Aptinyx to produce #drugs for neurological disorders [http://medcitynews.com/2015/09/naurex-startup/](http://medcitynews.com/2015/09/naurex-startup/)

**Blue Sky Innovation @ChicagoBlueSky**  
Naurex has created Aptinyx to work with "promising molecules" to treat neurological disorders [http://fw.to/8YbXyzH](http://fw.to/8YbXyzH)
Mandy Jackson @ScripMandy
Naurex Spinout Aptinyx Launches After Allergan Deal: http://bit.ly/1MqSCIn (Scrip subscribers) $AGN #NMDA

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