

GeNeuro receives French state grant to accelerate research into the role of HERV proteins in COVID-19

Geneva, Switzerland, January 26, 2021 – 7:30am CET – GeNeuro (Euronext Paris: CH0308403085 - GNRO), a biopharmaceutical company developing new treatments for neurodegenerative and autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis (MS), today announced it has received an award from the French national research agency, ANR (Agence Nationale de Recherche), for its COVERI project focused on understanding the role of human endogenous retrovirus (HERV) proteins in the abnormal immune-inflammation or the neurological damages suffered by important subsets of COVID-19 patients.

In June 2020, GeNeuro signed a research agreement with the CIRI (International Center for Research in Infectiology), in Lyon, France, a leading research institute against infectious diseases. This research effort concentrates on understanding the viral-host DNA interplay that is known to be able to derepress HERV gene locking mechanisms and produce pathogenic HERV proteins. It is suspected that proteins of the HERV-W family, with known pro-inflammatory and neurodegenerative properties, may be used by SARS-CoV-2 as a Trojan horse, which would bring new light in understanding syndromes associated to COVID-19 as well as a new opportunity to treat some of its worst consequences.

Based on initial results provided to the ANR, GeNeuro was awarded the grant as part of COVID-19 Research Action, which aims to support short-term research work in connection with the pandemic. GeNeuro will receive €137,000 to cover costs in the continuation of the collaborative research project, at and with the CIRI, to analyze a larger number of samples from multicenter cohorts of COVID-19 patients in Europe.

“We are very proud to receive this recognition from ANR and to play our part in the global efforts in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. Our partnership research with the CIRI leverages GeNeuro’s unique knowledge in human endogenous retroviruses, and CIRI’s world class expertise in the fight against infection. By doing so, we aim to expand our understanding of COVID-19 immunoinflammatory syndromes and neuronal damage to identify how we can best tackle the disease through this novel pathway,” said **Dr. Hervé Perron, Chief Scientific Officer of GeNeuro.**

“This excellent collaboration with GeNeuro is playing an important role in efforts to address COVID-19 by expanding our understanding of the role of human endogenous retroviruses in the disease. Many questions still need to be addressed, such as why does a virus like SARS-CoV-2 provoke the cytokine storm as well as sometimes delayed, neurological damage in a significant subset of patients. Human endogenous retroviruses (HERVs), which are the remnants of past viral infections in our genome, can be activated by exogenous viruses and could be key players in understanding how to stop or prevent superimposed pathogenic effects,” said **Dr. Branka Horvat, Research Director at the French Institute of Health and Medical Research’s International Center for Infectiology Research (CIRI) in Lyon.**

Should the research result in a proof-of-concept, GeNeuro’s temelimab, a monoclonal antibody designed to neutralize the pathogenic envelope protein pHERV-W that has already proven its excellent tolerability in Phase 2 trials, could be made immediately available for a therapeutic intervention against the severe immune and neurological consequences of COVID-19. This would provide a new and complementary approach in the treatment of SARS-CoV-2-infected patients.

About GeNeuro

GeNeuro's mission is to develop safe and effective treatments against neurological disorders and autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, by neutralizing causal factors encoded by HERVs, which represent 8% of human DNA.

GeNeuro is based in Geneva, Switzerland and has R&D facilities in Lyon, France. It has rights to 17 patent families protecting its technology.

For more information, visit: www.geneuro.com



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