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Start Codon to deliver premier life science and healthcare business acceleration program

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The accelerator will be the first within the Cambridge Cluster to provide life science start-ups with significant investment (up to Â£250K), a full-time dedicated team of experienced and active mentors, and office and lab space (located at the Milner Therapeutics Institute).



Start Codon, a new strategic initiative aimed at driving the translation of world-class research into commercially successful companies, has been founded and launched with funding from keystone investors including Cambridge Innovation Capital, Babraham Bioscience Technologies, Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, Dr. Jonathan Milner and Dr. Ian Tomlinson.

Start Codon will identify and recruit high potential life science and healthcare companies from across the UK and beyond, provide seed-funding, and leverage the world-class resources of the Cambridge Cluster to reduce risk and prepare them for a successful Series A fundraiser. The accelerator will be the first within the Cambridge Cluster to provide life science start-ups with significant investment (up to £250K), a full-time dedicated team of experienced and active mentors, and office and lab space (located at the Milner Therapeutics Institute). Start Codon now plans to invest in and support up to 50 start-up companies over the next 5 years.

Start Codon's executive team will be led by Dr Jason Mellad, previously CEO of Cambridge Epigenetix, which he transformed into a liquid biopsy diagnostic development firm via obtaining broad and exclusive patent rights to the use of epigenetic biomarker 5hmC in cancer diagnostics and leading a successful Series C to fundraise of c.$30m. Jason brings over a decade of experience in product development and commercialization, building and managing cross-disciplinary teams, intellectual property protection and exploitation, and closing deals with strategic biotech and pharma partners.

Dr. Ian Tomlinson has been appointed Chairman of the Start Codon Board. Dr. Tomlinson is also Chairman of Apollo Therapeutics and the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst. He has over 25 years of experience in the life sciences sector from academic research to biotech start-up to big pharma. He founded Domantis Limited with Sir Gregory Winter, which was acquired by GSK in 2006 for $454 million. He then served as Senior VP, Head of Worldwide Business Development and Head of Biopharm R&D at GSK. Dr. Mellad and Dr. Tomlinson will be joined by Michael Anstey of Cambridge Innovation Capital, Jo Parfrey, and Jonathan Milner as Directors of Start Codon.

Dr. Jason Mellad, CEO Start Codon, said: *"Our ambition is to provide life science and healthcare companies with a unique combination of funding, facilities, mentoring and support to fast track their development and success. We are selecting the most exciting pre-Series A companies from around the world, and bringing them to Cambridge, helping to solidify the region's position as a leading global cluster."*

Dr. James Sabry, M.D., Ph.D., global head of Pharma Partnering, Roche, said: *"We're very pleased to support Start Codon in harnessing the best research from the region and fostering healthcare innovation at its earliest stages. We believe some of the most cutting-edge science in the world is happening in Cambridge, and this investment builds on our commitment to driving scientific advances within the UK and globally."*

Dr. Michael Anstey, Ph.D., Investment Director at Cambridge Innovation Capital, added: *"Cambridge is the best place in Europe to build a life science business. Start Codon will bring together all the key elements here, to enable emerging companies to rapidly embark on their growth journey. We are proud to have been part of the Start Codon initiative from inception and we are excited to support the world-class businesses that will emerge from its programme in the future. The Cambridge ecosystem has already created over a dozen billion-pound businesses and we see Start Codon as an important facilitator in creating more such successes."*

Dr. Jonathan Milner, Ph.D., Co-founder and Deputy Chairman of Abcam plc, commented: "*In this golden age of biology, Cambridge stands out as the worlds centre for healthcare innovation and translation. Start Codon's innovative supercharged model will establish nurture and spin out the next generation of world-class healthcare companies that will positively impact all our lives. I am super thrilled to be working with such an esteemed and experienced set of stakeholders to guarantee the success of Start Codon. We look forward to enabling the next generation of Cambridge healthcare unicorns."*

Jo Parfrey, a Non-Executive Director at Babraham Bioscience Technologies Ltd who will represent the company on the Start Codon Board, commented: *"We are delighted to be involved in the Start Codon initiative as it looks to identify, support and develop future scale-up life-sciences companies. Our aim as a Campus is to not only positively impact the local Cambridge cluster, but also bio-science across the UK. As an ideal location to accommodate these ventures as they mature through the Start Codon journey, we hope to play a significant part in facilitating the next generation of innovative and entrepreneurial companies. We see the Start Codon initiative as complementary to our ongoing Accelerate@Babraham programme and are looking forward to working together to ensure these young ventures have access to the facilities and opportunities which will help them to develop successfully."*

The first cohort of 5 companies is now being recruited. Start Codon is looking for companies with disruptive innovations that will revolutionize modern healthcare and platform technologies underpinned by strong intellectual property, with a particular emphasis on novel therapeutics, diagnostics, medtech, and digital health.