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Vifor Pharma, University of Basel jointly establish the World's First Research Professorship

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Public-private partnership is intended to safeguard Switzerlandâ??s competitive position in pharmaceutical technologies of the future.



Nanomedicines are playing an increasingly important role in the development of innovative new medications. These drugs are able to overcome specific cellular barriers in the human body with a view to targeting their effect even more precisely. Nanopharmacy, therefore, promises to help advance medical science and bring significant benefit to patients.

At present, however, researchers are only just beginning to acquire the in-depth scientific insights needed for a fundamental understanding of the development of nanomedicines, their applications and especially the regulatory requirements for their approval across Europe and worldwide. Likewise, there is a lack of experts with the necessary specialist knowledge – and these experts are urgently needed in industry, at regulatory authorities and in medical practice, including in Switzerland. As with other areas of cutting-edge research, this will take the form of a global race: those able to present findings as quickly as possible will be able to assert themselves as a centre of excellence in nanopharmaceutics.

Spread over 10 years, the commitment of CHF 10 million by the Vifor Pharma Group is intended to establish the field of nanopharmacy research at the University of Basel and to support the training of corresponding experts. The newly-created professorships in Nanopharmaceutical and Regulatory Science will be based at the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. There are also plans to establish and develop an internationally renowned Excellence Platform for the development, authorisation and application of nanopharmaceuticals, as well as the training of experts in the field.

Vifor Pharma views its contribution as start-up funding for this Excellence Platform, which is supported and jointly endorsed by stakeholders from academia, industry and public authorities. The aim is for the platform to both focus on research and teaching, and also to seek out international partnerships, organise conferences and incorporate additional sponsors with a view to becoming a leading international centre for nanopharmacy. “In order to make rapid progress in nanopharmaceutics, we’re reliant on clear and scientifically sound parameters for authorisation and patient safety,” says Etienne Jornod, Executive Chairman of the Board of Directors at Vifor Pharma. “The field of nanopharmacy is growing quickly, and it’s important to secure a leading position in this innovative area of medicine with the help of qualified experts. That’s why we want to help ensure that Switzerland establishes a strong research foundation in this emerging area of pharmaceutical development.”

For the University of Basel, this collaboration marks an important step in the further development of its life sciences focal area. “We’re proud to be able to develop this promising field of research in collaboration with a major industrial partner,” says Professor Andrea Schenker-Wicki, President of the University of Basel. “The crucial thing here is that we’re not only developing the scientific foundations, but also training the experts who will take this knowledge with them into industry and public authorities.” It is, she says, a key step for Basel and Switzerland in terms of their ability to compete on the international stage.

Vifor Pharma Group is a global pharmaceuticals company headquartered in Switzerland. It aims to become the global leader in iron deficiency, nephrology and cardio-renal therapies. The company is the partner of choice for pharmaceuticals and innovative patient-focused solutions. The Vifor Pharma Group strives to help patients around the world with severe and chronic diseases lead better, healthier lives. The company develops, manufactures and markets pharmaceutical products for precision patient care.

The University of Basel has an international reputation of outstanding achievements in research and teaching. Founded in 1460, the University of Basel is the oldest university in Switzerland and has a history of success going back over 550 years. As a comprehensive university offering a wide range of high-quality educational opportunities, the University of Basel attracts students from Switzerland and the entire world, offering them outstanding studying conditions as they work towards their bachelor’s, master’s or PhD degrees.