aTyr Pharma Appoints John C. McKew, Ph.D., as Vice President, Research

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Architect of Novel Translational Rare Disease Programs at NIH Adds Depth to Existing Team of Rare Disease Experts

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SAN DIEGO and HONG KONG, Oct. 22, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- aTyr Pharma ("aTyr"), an innovative rare disease therapeutics enterprise, announced today that rare disease expert John C. McKew, Ph.D., joined the company as vice president, research. Dr. McKew brings more than two decades of expertise in translational research, including key leadership positions at the National Institutes of Health, Wyeth Research and Genetics Institute, Inc. (prior to its acquisition by Wyeth). Dr. McKew will lead aTyr's efforts to expand and translate its novel Physiocrine biology into meaningful therapeutics to treat rare, grave immune-driven disorders.

"John's team at NIH worked collaboratively with biotech and academic scientists on more than thirty rare disease programs, forging new paths to bring promising preclinical therapeutic ideas into the clinical research setting. His experience across diverse therapeutic areas fits perfectly with our mission to tap Physiocrine biology as a new source of meaningful medicines with the potential to treat a broad spectrum of rare diseases," said John Mendlein, Ph.D., CEO and executive chairman of aTyr Pharma. "Our goal is to assemble a world-class team of scientists, physicians, and business experts with unparalleled expertise in rare diseases, to shepherd our promising drugs from product concept through the clinic and ultimately to patients. We are thrilled to welcome John to aTyr."

"Physiocrines represent a new area of biology with vast potential to address a myriad of rare diseases. I am excited to be a part of this groundbreaking therapeutic opportunity and look forward to mining aTyr's biology to identify drug candidates with the potential to benefit patients," said Dr. McKew. "The existing team is deeply committed to creative and innovative approaches to drug discovery, and I look forward to working alongside these exceptional scientists, physicians and commercial leaders, both in San Diego as well as at Pangu, aTyr's subsidiary in Hong Kong."

Dr. McKew most recently served as the acting scientific director of the Division of Preclinical Innovation at the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) within the National Institutes of Health. His responsibilities included developing both the Therapeutics for Rare and Neglected Disease (TRND) and the Bridging Interventional Development Gaps (BrIDGs) programs. Both programs focus on novel public/private partnerships to advance drug discovery projects through preclinical development into early clinical development. Before joining the NIH, Dr. McKew held a director level position at Wyeth Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At Wyeth Research he led a variety of research initiatives including a hit-to-lead chemistry group which supported cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and metabolic disease therapeutic areas. Prior to Wyeth Research, he was employed by Genetics Institute, Inc., where he worked on translating novel inflammation targets into clinical candidates. Dr. McKew is currently an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Boston University School of Medicine. He graduated from State University of New York at Stony Brook with B.S. degrees in Chemistry and Biochemistry. He completed his Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry at University of California, Davis and held post-doctoral research positions at the University of Geneva and Firmenich, SA.

About Physiocrines
Among their various homeostatic functions, some Physiocrines act as extracellular signaling molecules to orchestrate immuno-homeostasis in response to stress and other physiological changes. Physiocrines comprise naturally occurring proteins derived from tRNA synthetases that play fundamental roles in the function of human physiology and restoring pathophysiological states to a healthier state. aTyr is currently focused on Physiocrines that act as endogenous modulators of our immune and regenerative systems. Physiocrines offer the opportunity for modulating biological pathways through newly discovered naturally occurring mechanisms, many of which may provide multiple therapeutic advantages, including improved efficacy and reduced side effect profiles compared to many existing therapeutics.

About aTyr Pharma
aTyr Pharma is developing a pipeline of therapeutic products based on Physiocrine biology. To protect these products aTyr built a dominant intellectual property estate comprising over 200 patent applications and patents. aTyr's key programs are currently focused on rare disorders where the immune system is imbalanced. These diseases are serious, potentially life-threatening rare diseases, for which there are currently no effective, safe, long-term treatments. The privately held biotech was founded by The Scripps Research Institute Professor Paul Schimmel, a leading aminoacyl tRNA synthetase scientist, and is backed by top life sciences investors Alta Partners, Cardinal Partners, Domain Associates and Polaris Partners. For more information, please visit http://www.atyrpharma.com.

To view the original version on PR Newswire, visit:http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/atyr-pharma-appoints-john-c-mckew-phd-as-vice-president-research-880310959.html

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