aTyr Pharma Appoints Fred Ramsdell, Ph.D., as Vice President, Immunology

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- Industry Veteran Established Immunology Research Programs at NovoNordisk, ZymoGenetics
- Discovered Foxp3 Gene Critical for Regulating Immune Function

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SAN DIEGO and HONG KONG, Nov. 3, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- aTyr Pharma ("aTyr"), an innovative rare disease therapeutics enterprise, announced today that Fred Ramsdell, Ph.D., joined aTyr as vice president, immunology. Prior to joining aTyr, Dr. Ramsdell helped establish the immunobiology research strategy for both Darwin Molecular and NovoNordisk. While at Celltech he led research efforts resulting in the discovery of Foxp3, a critical gene for normal immune function, the absence of which results in a rare but fatal autoimmunity in humans, and contributed to the identification and development of sclerostin, the target of a Phase III clinical program at Amgen/UCB.

"With 20+ years of research in immunobiology, Fred represents a world class scientific addition to our team. Among other functions, Physiocrines act to maintain and restore homeostasis in the immune system, providing a pathway to restore healthy physiological states after injury or illness," said John Mendlein, Ph.D., CEO and executive chairman of aTyr Pharma. "Fred will work closely with our vice president of research, John McKew, Ph.D., to help us identify currently untapped therapeutic targets with the potential to be developed into best- and first-in-class medicines to address grave immune-driven disorders."

"I was first drawn to aTyr by the opportunity to discover products from the novel, untapped mechanisms for modulating immune function, supported by a compelling genetic and evolutionary foundation," said Dr. Ramsdell. "A major challenge to developing immune-modulating therapies has been to understand the complex interactions that regulate the immune system. Working with Physiocrines represents a tremendous opportunity to orchestrate those mechanisms using existing physiological processes. I'm thrilled to be joining the tremendous team already assembled at aTyr. "

Since 1992, Dr. Ramsdell has led drug discovery programs where he oversaw identification and characterization of novel proteins involved in immune regulation. His leadership positions include head of the Discovery Immunology Group at Novo Nordisk's Inflammation Research Center, associate director of Antibody Target Discovery at ZymoGenetics, and senior director of Discovery Biology at Celltech, R&D. Prior to Celltech, Dr. Ramsdell held scientist positions at Darwin Molecular Corp and Immunex Research and Development Corporation. He did his post-doctoral studies at the National Institutes of Health, researching a variety of questions regarding immune cell function and tolerance. He received his Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology from University of California, Los Angeles and his B.S. in Biochemistry and Cell Biology from University of California, San Diego.

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.

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