

A research consortium under the direction of Grünenthal will receive a grant of €1.5 million from the European Fund for Regional Development and the Federal State of North Rhein-Westphalia

- ***Research grant awarded by Leitmarktwettbewerb LifeSciences.NRW to improve the development of new analgesic drugs***
- ***The consortium members, founded and led by Grünenthal, are from the University Hospitals of Cologne and Bonn, and a specialist scientific company, Life & Brain***

Aachen, Germany, September 27, 2016. The LifeSciences.NRW called for consortia of small and medium-sized companies and academic groups within North Rhein-Westphalia to compete in making proposals for developing solutions to solve current challenges within the field of biomedical sciences. Of the 51 submissions, the project of the consortium under the direction of Grünenthal was also considered worthy of funding. This proposal, entitled NeuRoWeg, was developed together with the University Hospitals in Cologne and Bonn, and a small specialist company, Life & Brain in Bonn, and will be supported with a grant of €1.5 million over the next three years. The aim is to improve the treatment of patients suffering from neuropathic pain, as this is only inadequately managed with currently available therapeutic agents.

The € 1.5 million funding by the EU and the State of NRW will be used to support research into the molecular basis of neuropathic pain, and to develop novel test systems which will allow the efficacy of new analgesics for patients to be assessed more accurately and rapidly. This is reflected in the title of the NeuRoWeg project, “Innovative test systems for identifying curative analgesics with reliable efficacy in patients”.

Neuropathic pain arises as a result of nerve injury caused by diseases such as diabetes, or by chemotherapy, or by accidents or surgery. It is suffered by approximately 7% - 10% of the general population¹, a very large number of people, and its incidence increases with age, especially in women.

Dr. Klaus-Dieter Langner, Chief Scientific Officer of Grünenthal, said “I am looking forward to the results of this research project. I am also delighted that with the University Hospitals of Cologne and of Bonn, and with Life & Brain, we will have excellent partners within NRW at our side to jointly improve the prospects for developing better drug therapies for patients suffering from neuropathic pain.”

Dr. Gregor Bahrenberg, the NeuRoWeg project coordinator and Laboratory Head at Grünenthal, added “We continually strive to identify novel test systems with which we can more reliably and more rapidly characterize whether new drugs will be effective in humans. In order to achieve this, we want to collaborate with our partners to establish innovative assays employing stem cells derived from human skin or blood cells to advance the means for identifying novel pain medications which can cure patients. To this end, we will combine the expertise of renowned specialists with cutting-edge technologies.

Contact: Steffen Fritzsche, Head Corporate Communications
Tel.: +49 241 569-1335, Fax.: +49 241 569-51335, steffen.fritzsche@grunenthal.com

Grünenthal GmbH, 52099 Aachen, Germany, www.grunenthal.com

The ultimate aim is to predict the efficacy of new drugs in order to select the most suitable of the many research compounds for clinical development”.

Dr. Petra Bloms-Funke is Head of the Department of Medical Intelligence and Innovation Partnerships and responsible for the acquisition of non-dilutive research funding for Grünenthal Innovation, the Research and Development Unit. She adds: “Our cooperative project NeuRoWeg will enhance our understanding of pain as a disease and how to cure it. A key problem in the development of new medicines is the poor ability of currently available test systems to predict efficacy in patients. This can lead to high failure rates during clinical development. We anticipate a considerable improvement with the highly innovative test systems we have planned. The consortium was founded because the success of this highly complex project will require coordinated contributions from highly specialized experts from different areas. Together we can advance and accelerate the development of new and effective pain medications, and make them available to patients more quickly than possible today. We are greatly looking forward to this inter-disciplinary collaboration.”

Consortium Research Project

Under the direction of Grünenthal, the University Hospital Cologne, the University Hospital Bonn, and the company Life & Brain in Bonn will each contribute their respective expertise to improve the development of new and effective drugs:

- Grünenthal, Aachen (Dr. Petra Bloms-Funke, Dr. Gregor Bahrenberg) – emergence and therapy of neuropathic pain; characterization of specific target proteins in cells (pain targets); identification and selection of new drugs
- University Hospital Bonn (Prof. Oliver Brüstle, Dr. Michael Peitz) – generation and differentiation of stem cells for therapeutic use in the treatment of and research into neurological disorders
- Life & Brain, Bonn (Prof. Oliver Brüstle, Dipl. Biol. Simone Haupt) – application of stem cell technologies for the development of predictive biological test systems
- University Hospital Cologne (Prof. Tim Hucho) – application of a special microscope technology, the so-called High Content Screening procedure, to investigate pain mechanisms and drug effects in pain cells

About the funding of bio-medical research and development in North Rhein-Westphalia with resources from the EU and of the Federal State of NRW

The Federal State of North Rhein-Westphalia (NRW) initiated the Leitmarkt Wettbewerb LifeSciences.NRW, a funding competition, in 2015 to develop solutions to challenges in the field of health and well-being for our aging population. This initiative offers funding opportunities for groups of small and medium-sized enterprises, academic institutions and pharmaceutical companies in North Rhein-Westphalia, for innovative projects in research and development with resources provided by the EU and the State of North Rhein-Westphalia. By supporting innovation, the State of North Rhein-Westphalia wishes to secure sustainable growth and employment opportunities, and increase its international visibility as a leading location for Life Sciences.

About Grünenthal

The Grünenthal Group is an independent, family-owned, international research-based pharmaceutical company headquartered in Aachen, Germany. We are an entrepreneurial specialist delivering true benefits to patients. By sustainably investing in research and development above the industrial average, we are committing to innovation in order to treat unmet medical needs and bring value-adding products to markets. Grünenthal is a fully integrated research & development company with a long track record of bringing innovative pain treatments and state-of-the-art technologies to patients.

Altogether, the Grünenthal Group is present in 32 countries with affiliates in Europe, Latin America and the US. Grünenthal products are sold in more than 155 countries and approx. 5,400 employees are working for the Grünenthal Group worldwide. In 2015, Grünenthal achieved revenues of € 1.2 bn. More information: www.grunenthal.com.

Literature

¹ van Hecke O. et al, Neuropathic pain in the general population: a systematic review of epidemiological studies. Pain. 2014 Apr;155(4):654-62

Contact: Steffen Fritzsche, Head Corporate Communications
Tel.: +49 241 569-1335, Fax.: +49 241 569-51335, steffen.fritzsche@grunenthal.com

Grünenthal GmbH, 52099 Aachen, Germany, www.grunenthal.com