



## Servier new research partnership with the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute to target Achilles' heel of many cancers

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Melbourne, Australia and Suresnes, France (Date TBC): The European pharmaceutical company Servier has established a collaborative partnership with the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute to facilitate the development of new agents that could be effective in treating several types of cancer, particularly blood cancers.

A research team at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, led by Associate Professor Guillaume Lessene, will test in preclinical models how cancer cells respond to treatment with the Mcl-1-inhibitory BH3-mimetics discovered by the Servier – Vernalis collaboration. The results will indicate whether this new class of research compounds could be useful in the future for treating people with cancer, and which types of cancer the compounds would be most effective against.

“Mcl-1 is a promising therapeutic target for many types of cancer. There is a considerable body of experimental evidence pinpointing Mcl-1 as the Achilles' heel for many cancers, particularly blood cancers,” said Associate Professor Lessene at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute. “Institute researchers made the initial discovery explaining how Bcl-2 played a role in cancer more than 20 years ago. We have been at the forefront of research revealing how the Bcl-2 family promotes cancer development and treatment resistance and have provided considerable experience in evaluating and developing potential anti-cancer agents, including BH3-mimetics.”

Jean-Pierre Abastado, Head of the Oncology Pole and Olivier Geneste, Director of Apoptosis Programs at Servier said: “the discovery of research compounds inhibiting selectively Mcl-1 reflects a long term commitment to drug discovery research targeting the Bcl-2 family of inhibitors of apoptosis. We are convinced that our collaboration with the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute will generate critical data and ideas helping the development of our anti Mcl-1 drug candidates and that our joint research efforts will facilitate bringing a highly innovative treatment to cancer patients.”

### About Mcl-1:

Mcl-1 is part of a closely related group of proteins known as the ‘Bcl-2 family’, which also includes proteins called Bcl-2 and Bcl-xL. Like Mcl-1, Bcl-2 and Bcl-xL are also important in extending the lifespan of certain types of cancer cells.



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### **About the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute:**

The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, Melbourne, Australia, has more than 750 researchers who are working to understand, prevent and treat diseases including blood, breast and bowel cancers, diabetes, arthritis, coeliac disease and malaria.

There are more than 100 national and international clinical trials originating from research undertaken at the institute. These include trials of vaccines for type 1 diabetes, coeliac disease and malaria; and trials of a new class of anti-cancer drugs, called BH3-mimetics, for treating patients with leukaemia.

For more information contact Vanessa Solomon, Communications Adviser, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, on +61 3 9345 2971, +61 431766715 or [solomon@wehi.edu.au](mailto:solomon@wehi.edu.au)

### **About Servier:**

Servier is an independent French pharmaceutical research company. Its development is based on the continuous pursuit of innovation in the therapeutic areas of cardiovascular-, metabolic-, neurologic-, psychiatric-, bone- and joint diseases as well as cancer. In 2013, the company recorded a turnover of 4.2 billion euros. 91 percent of Servier drugs are consumed outside France. 27 percent of turnover from Servier drugs were reinvested in Research and Development in 2013. With a strong international presence in 140 countries, Servier employs more than 21,000 people worldwide.

For further information about Servier, please visit [www.servier.com](http://www.servier.com)



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