



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

**AmorChem invests in new DUB target for neuro-inflammation.**

**Montreal, December 17, 2013** — AmorChem is pleased to announce the financing of a project in neuro-inflammation in collaboration with Dr. Philippe Gros, Professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Vice-Dean, Life Sciences, of the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University. Using a sophisticated *in vivo* genome-wide screening platform in mice undergoing experimental neuro-inflammation, Dr. Gros recently discovered a novel anti-inflammatory target in the deubiquitinylation (DUB) family of enzymes. It is that discovery that is the focus of the AmorChem financing announced today.

The discovery platform established by Dr. Gros and his team consists of screening randomly mutagenized mice for the appearance of mutations that protect against acute neuro-inflammation, using a well-defined animal model of encephalitis induced by infection with *Plasmodium berghei* ANKA (PbA). This model of neuro-inflammation was selected because it is robust and effective, and because Dr. Gros's lab had previously used it to demonstrate the critical role of certain cytokines (C5a), kinases (JAK3) and transcription factors (STAT1, IRF1, IRF8) in pathological inflammation.

"We are very excited to be working on this novel DUB enzyme in the context of neuro-inflammation. The Ubiquitin/Deubiquitin pathways are thought to be the next kinase/phosphatase platforms and, as such, this new class of targets is attractive to pharma," says Elizabeth Douville, general partner at AmorChem. "While preliminary data indicates that this DUB may play a role in multiple sclerosis (MS), the project also aims to identify additional inflammation-related indications in which modulating the target would prove beneficial," she adds.

More than 2.5 million people worldwide are estimated to be affected by MS, which most commonly afflicts people aged 15-40 years. Canadians have one of the highest rates of MS in the world. It is a progressive autoimmune disease in which the body attacks its own central nervous system, gradually destroying the myelin sheath that surrounds nerve fibers, thereby damaging sites in the brain and spinal cord. The nerve damage leads to progressive neurological symptoms such as numbness, tingling, loss of control of certain bodily functions and paralysis, thus profoundly affecting a person's quality of life. No cure is currently available, and treatment options are needed.

"Dr. Gros is a leader in the McGill and scientific communities," notes Dr. Rose Goldstein, McGill's Vice-Principal (Research and International Relations). "I can attest personally to Dr. Gros's true talent for conceiving, developing, and conducting research that results in real improvements in the lives of patients. It is exciting to see AmorChem invest in the work of one of McGill's top labs, and I look forward with great anticipation to the advancements generated by this new partnership."

"With a career spanning more than 30 years in genetics, host resistance and inflammation, Dr. Gros brings invaluable scientific expertise to this project. Combined with the recent interest of pharma in

opportunities at the preclinical stage of development in the field of multiple sclerosis this makes this partnership of specific interest to AmorChem,” says Inès Holzbour, general partner at AmorChem.

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#### **ABOUT AMORCHEM L.P.**

AmorChem L.P. ([www.amorchem.com](http://www.amorchem.com)) is a venture capital fund located in Montreal focused on investing in promising life science projects originating from Quebec-based universities and research centres. The principal limited partners of this fund are Investissement-Québec, FIER Partenaires, Fonds de solidarité FTQ and Merck & Co. This fund is the latest addition to the GeneChem portfolio of funds, a fund manager in existence since 1997. AmorChem’s innovative business model involves financing research-stage projects to enable them to reach pre-clinical proof-of-concept (“POC”) in a semi-virtual mode within 18-24 months. The fund seeks to generate returns through a two-pronged exit strategy: sell projects having reached POC to large biotechnology or pharmaceutical companies; or bundle them into new spin-out companies. The projects will be managed by AmorChem using external resources. To that effect, AmorChem has established a strategic partnership with the Biotechnology Research Institute in order to access its R&D platforms. In addition, to enabling projects requiring small molecules as tools or drug leads, AmorChem has founded NuChem Therapeutics Inc., a medicinal chemistry contract-research company ([www.nuchemtherapeutics.com](http://www.nuchemtherapeutics.com)).

#### **ABOUT MCGILL UNIVERSITY**

Founded in Montreal, Quebec, in 1821, McGill is a leading Canadian post-secondary institution. It has two campuses, 11 faculties, 11 professional schools, 300 programs of study and some 39,000 students, including more than 9,300 graduate students. McGill attracts students from over 150 countries around the world, its 8,200 international students making up 21 per cent of the student body. For further information, go to: [www.mcgill.ca](http://www.mcgill.ca)

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