



## Spirea completes seed funding round to develop the next generation of antibody drug conjugate therapeutics

- *Spirea, a spin-out from the University of Cambridge, has developed a novel antibody drug conjugate platform and aims to reshape the future of cancer treatment*
- *Spirea's flexible technology achieves a high and stable drug-to-antibody ratio resulting in an improved therapeutic index to treat a wider range of patients*
- *Seed investment from Meltwind and Start Codon will accelerate in vivo proof-of-concept studies which are scheduled for completion by Q4 2020*

**Cambridge, UK, 13 July 2020:** Spirea Limited (Spirea), a spin-out from the University of Cambridge founded to deliver the next generation of antibody drug conjugate (ADC) therapeutics for the treatment of multiple cancers, has today announced that it has closed a seed investment round, led by Meltwind and Start Codon. The financing will progress the development of its ADC technology, which allows the delivery of more drug payload to tumour cells resulting in greater efficacy, tolerability and the ability to treat more cancer patients.

ADC drugs combine the cell killing activity of a cytotoxic drug payload with the targeting ability of an antibody. Despite strong interest in the field from pharmaceutical companies, only eight ADCs have successfully reached the market with many programmes stalled due to constraints with the format, toxic side-effects and limitations in the range of cancer patients who can be treated.

Spirea's novel technology overcomes these issues by offering high drug-to-antibody ratios (DARs), drug stability and design flexibility which enable the development of differentiated ADCs with improved efficacy and safety. Because the technology allows more drug to be loaded onto the targeting antibody whilst maintaining drug stability, payloads can also be customised to the target, enabling flexibility in payload potencies, creative drug combinations and novel modes of action to serve a wider patient group. Recent *in vitro* proof-of-concept studies have demonstrated successful ADC manufacturing with an impressive DAR, no aggregation, good serum stability and high cell-killing activity on HER2 breast cancer cells.

**Dr Myriam Ouberai, CEO of Spirea, commented:** *"Incorporation of our technology into ADC products will accelerate and energise the important transition away from the 'one size fits all' approach currently being pursued in ADC development, resulting in novel products with a competitive and differentiated profile. The platform has the power to unlock the development of a new generation of powerful and well-tolerated drugs, which have been so far inaccessible to many cancer patients. We are delighted to have attracted seed funding from Meltwind and Start Codon, and to be part of the first Start Codon incubator programme. This investment and support serve as endorsements of our approach and will allow us to optimise and validate our technology."*

**Dr Jonathan Milner, Executive Director at Meltwind, said:** *"The market for ADCs is anticipated to reach \$7.5 billion by 2025. Spirea's transformative approach to addressing the common obstacles faced in ADC development has the potential to disrupt this field entirely, placing the Company in a unique position to address a very significant market opportunity. This is an exciting time for Spirea and we are pleased to be supporting them."*

**Dr Jason Mellad, Co-Founder and CEO at Start Codon, said:** *"We are very excited to be working closely with Spirea to support their start-up journey. The company has already demonstrated promising in vitro results and we look forward to seeing the technology develop further."*

Spirea has previously received investment from Innovate UK, IP Group and Cambridge Enterprise and is supported by a number of successful, high-profile board members from the life sciences including Jane Dancer (former Chief Business Officer at F-star), Gaynor Fryers (former Vice-President of Business Development at AstraZeneca) and Christine Martin (Head of Life Science Investment at Cambridge Enterprise). Spirea benefits from being part of the healthcare business accelerator Start Codon and the Cambridge Judge Entrepreneurship Centre's Accelerator, Accelerate Cambridge.

For further information about Spirea, please visit: [www.spirea.co.uk](http://www.spirea.co.uk)

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**



**Dr Myriam Ouberai**  
CEO  
Spirea



**Dr Jonathan Milner**  
Executive Director  
Meltwind



**Dr Jason Mellad**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
Start Codon

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**About Spirea** [www.spirea.co.uk](http://www.spirea.co.uk)

Spirea has developed an exciting and flexible new approach to building ADCs that allows more drug payload to be specifically directed to the tumour cell. This results in an increase in therapeutic effect whilst substantially reducing debilitating side-effects. By delivering the right amount of the right drug to the right cells Spirea's proprietary technology will unlock a new generation of accessible, powerful and well-tolerated medicines for the treatment of a wide range of cancers.

Spirea will use its revolutionary technology to build a pipeline of proprietary and partnered ADC therapeutics. As well as developing its own drugs, the company plans to collaborate with partners on new programmes and to revive pre-existing preclinical and clinical-stage assets that have failed because of narrow therapeutic index.

Spirea was founded by Dr Myriam Ouberai, CEO, following her research at the Nanoscience Centre, University of Cambridge and extensive experience in biopharmaceuticals in both academia and industry. Spirea's Head of Business Operations, Adam Collier, has over 15 years' experience in

biotech management, business development and early-stage company formation, having held several senior positions at Medimmune, Ablynx and Isogenica. He was also Founder-Director of Horizon Discovery (AIM:HZD).

#### **About Meltwind**

Meltwind principally invests in early stage life science and healthcare companies and currently has a portfolio of over 40 companies. Meltwind is based in Cambridge UK and run by Dr Jonathan Milner – founder of Abcam plc and active angel investor.

#### **About Start Codon [www.startcodon.co](http://www.startcodon.co)**

Start Codon is a new model of life science and healthcare business accelerator, and the first in Cambridge, UK to provide companies with a combination of seed funding, facilities, mentoring and access to a dedicated team and network of industry leading contacts. Founding investors in Start Codon include Cambridge Innovation Capital, the Babraham Research Campus through Babraham Bioscience Technologies, Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, Dr Jonathan Milner and Dr Ian Tomlinson.

Founded to identify ideas that have the potential to impact the diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of disease, and support their path to successful funding, Start Codon aims to revolutionise the way life science and healthcare innovation is commercialised by reducing risk in investment opportunities and developing companies in the Cambridge, UK cluster that are built to succeed globally.

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