

Sunesis Pharmaceuticals Announces Preclinical Milestone Payment in BACE Collaboration with Merck

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SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., May 2, 2007 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Sunesis Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (Nasdaq: SNSS) today announced that it has earned a \$1 million payment from Merck & Co., Inc. for meeting a preclinical milestone in the companies' collaboration to develop oral small molecule inhibitors of beta-amyloid converting enzyme (BACE), which is believed to play a key role in Alzheimer's disease.

"We believe BACE is an important target against Alzheimer's disease. Through our collaboration with Sunesis, Merck continues to make significant progress in the development of oral inhibitors of BACE that are both potent and able to cross the blood-brain barrier," said Merv Turner, Ph.D., Merck Senior Vice President, Worldwide Licensing and External Research.

"We are proud of our collaboration with Merck and we are hopeful that a resulting product candidate will advance to clinical trials," said Bob McDowell, Vice President of Research at Sunesis.

About BACE

The deposition of beta-amyloid peptide in the brain is believed to be a central event in the development of Alzheimer's disease. This process is enabled by a key enzyme that cleaves the amyloid precursor protein into peptide fragments. The fragments aggregate to form insoluble plaques that inhibit the normal functioning of the brain. BACE inhibitors may block this cleavage, thereby preventing the plaque build-up that is a hallmark of Alzheimer's pathogenesis.

About Sunesis Pharmaceuticals

Sunesis is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery, development and commercialization of novel small molecule therapeutics for oncology and other serious diseases. Sunesis has built a broad product candidate portfolio through internal discovery and in-licensing of novel cancer therapeutics. Sunesis is advancing its product candidates through in-house research and development efforts and strategic collaborations with leading pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies. For additional information on Sunesis Pharmaceuticals, please visit <http://www.sunesis.com>.

Safe Harbor Statement

This press release contains forward-looking statements that involve substantial risks and uncertainties. Sunesis may not actually achieve the plans, intentions or expectations contained in such forward-looking statements. Actual results or events could differ materially from the plans, intentions and expectations contained in such forward-looking statements. Sunesis does not assume any obligation to update any such forward-looking statements.

SOURCE Sunesis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

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