



## Versant Ventures Launches Cimeio Therapeutics with \$50 Million Series A

- Novel cell therapy company launched out of Versant's Ridgeline Discovery Engine —
- Cimeio developing Shielded-Cell & Immunotherapy Pairs aimed at revolutionizing cell therapeutics —
- Applications in rare genetic diseases, hematologic malignancies and autoimmune disorders —

April 13, 2022 Basel, Switzerland and Boston, MA

Today, Versant Ventures announced the debut of Cimeio Therapeutics, a biotechnology company developing a novel approach to cell therapies. Versant has made a \$50 million Series A commitment to Cimeio, which is the most recent start-up to emerge from the firm's Ridgeline Discovery Engine in Basel, Switzerland.

Cimeio's platform has the potential to transform the treatment of patients with rare genetic diseases, hematologic malignancies and autoimmune disorders. The company's initial focus is on a novel approach to hematopoietic stem cell (HSC) transplants and adoptive cell therapy (ACT).

HSC transplants are the only curative treatments for certain debilitating and life-threatening diseases, but many patients are ineligible due to the intensive chemotherapy and radiation conditioning required. While targeted therapeutics have recently emerged as alternatives to harsh conditioning agents, these have fallen short due to the absence of sufficiently selective targets. Furthermore, there are few options for salvaging unsuccessful transplants or for dealing with residual or recurring disease.

Cimeio seeks to transform HSC transplant and ACT eligibility and outcomes with its cell-shielding technology and precisely paired immunotherapies. The company's proprietary immunotherapies deplete diseased cells, while its cell-shielding technology protects healthy transplanted cells and allows them to engraft. Because the transplanted cells

are shielded, the immunotherapy can continue to be safely administered post-transplant to boost engraftment or to treat minimal residual disease.

“Our Shielded-Cell & Immunotherapy Pairs represent a fundamentally new approach to cellular therapy,” said Cimeio CEO Thomas Fuchs. “We believe our technology platform has the potential to significantly improve HSC transplant, and will one day allow it to be given as an outpatient procedure in some circumstances.”

“Making cell therapies effective and practical for large numbers of patients is an important element of Versant’s company creation activities, and we are confident that Cimeio is well-positioned to use its powerful platform to generate a pipeline of cellular and paired immunotherapy candidates for a range of diseases,” added Alex Mayweg, Ph.D., Managing Director at Versant and a Cimeio board member.

## Cimeio Technology Platform

Cimeio’s shielding technology was discovered and developed in the labs of founder Lukas Jeker, M.D., Ph.D., Professor at the Department of Biomedicine, University of Basel, Head of Experimental Transplantation Immunology & Nephrology at the Basel University Hospital, and Senior Vice President of Gene Editing at Cimeio.

“We were able to specifically edit a cell surface receptor in a way that completely prevented antibody binding while keeping the receptor functional. This type of epitope editing could allow the shielding of any cell surface receptor, which gives our technology much broader application than removing a target entirely,” said Dr. Jeker.

Cimeio uses gene editing tools to insert novel protein variants into HSCs or other types of cells, allowing the cells to maintain their function while making them resistant to depletion by the paired immunotherapy. Cimeio’s platform has effectively shielded cells from depletion mediated by antibodies, T-cell engagers, ADCs, and CAR-T cells in preclinical studies. The company is advancing its first programs towards clinical development in 2023.

## Leadership and Operating Plans

Cimeio has built a leadership team of disease area and cell therapy veterans, and has assembled a scientific advisory board of gene editing and HSC transplant experts.

## Management

- Thomas Fuchs, CEO. Mr. Fuchs joined Cimeio from Genentech/Roche where he led its Hematology Franchise and was responsible for the portfolio strategy and life cycle management for the disease area.
- Stefanie Urlinger, Ph.D., SVP Biology. Dr. Urlinger is a protein engineering expert who has led the discovery of dozens of antibodies during her time at Morphosys and iOmx,

and works closely with academic founder Dr. Jeker.

- Lukas Jeker, M.D., Ph.D., SVP Gene Editing. Dr. Jeker is a world leader in the field of applied genome editing and Professor of Experimental Transplantation Immunology & Nephrology at the University of Basel. Earlier in his career he conducted research in the lab of Jeff Bluestone at the University of California San Francisco as a post-doc and later an Assistant Adjunct Professor.
- Daniel Stark, Ph.D., Chief Manufacturing Officer. Dr. Stark formerly was head of Manufacturing Science and Technology (MSAT) at Novartis Cell & Gene Therapies, where he oversaw CMC for Kymriah and Novartis' pipeline of cellular therapies.
- Thomas Winkler, M.D., CMO. Dr. Winkler is a physician-scientist who spent 11 years conducting basic and clinical research related to various benign and malignant hematological diseases, stem cell biology, and regenerative medicine at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, MD, and later led early stage and pivotal studies at Agios and AstraZeneca.
- Tristan Imbert, CFO. Mr. Imbert previously was Senior Vice President and CFO of Novartis Gene Therapies, where he oversaw the scale up and commercialization of Zolgensma.

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- Chairman Fyodor Urnov, Ph.D., is Scientific Director at the Innovative Genomics Institute and Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Urnov's research is focused on development and advancement to the clinic of novel approaches to treat human disease using CRISPR-based genome and epigenome editing.
- Jeff Bluestone, Ph.D., President and CEO of Sonoma BioTherapeutics. Dr. Bluestone is one of the leading immunologists in the field of T cell activation and immune tolerance research that has led to the development of multiple immunotherapies.
- Toni Cathomen, Ph.D., Director at the Institute for Transfusion Medicine and Gene Therapy and a Professor at the University of Freiburg. Dr. Cathomen's research is focused on improving CRISPR-Cas platforms for therapeutic applications in human stem cells.
- Corey Cutler, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director of the Stem Cell Transplantation Program at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Cutler's research is focused on developing novel methods of acute and chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) prophylaxis and therapy, transplant for the myelodysplastic syndromes, and decision theory in stem cell transplantation.
- Suneet Agarwal, M.D., Ph.D., Co-Program Leader for the Stem Cell Transplant Center at the Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Center and

Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Harvard Medical School. Dr. Agarwal's research is focused on developing innovative therapies using novel medications or a patient's own cells to treat genetic blood disorders.

Cimeio is located in Boston, MA, and Basel, Switzerland, and is rapidly expanding its research and CMC teams to advance its three lead programs and expand its portfolio. Cimeio also has active research collaborations with Dr. Jeker's lab, with Matt Porteus, M.D., Ph.D., at Stanford University, and with Dr. Cathomen's research group.

## **About Cimeio Therapeutics**

Cimeio Therapeutics is an applied gene editing, cellular, and immunotherapy company developing a portfolio of Shielded-Cell & Immunotherapy Pairs™ for patients with debilitating and life-threatening diseases. Cimeio's proprietary technology platform is based on the discovery of novel protein variants, which when inserted into cells allow them to preserve function while resisting depletion by a precisely paired immunotherapy. This technology has significant therapeutic potential, which Cimeio is using to develop curative treatments for patients with genetic diseases, hematologic malignancies, and severe autoimmune disorders. For more information, please visit [www.cimeio.com](http://www.cimeio.com).

## **About Versant Ventures**

Versant Ventures is a leading healthcare venture capital firm committed to helping exceptional entrepreneurs build the next generation of great companies. The firm's emphasis is on biotechnology companies that are discovering and developing novel therapeutics. With \$4.2 billion under management and offices in the U.S., Canada and Europe, Versant has built a team with deep investment, operating and R&D expertise that enables a hands-on approach to company building. Since the firm's founding in 1999, more than 85 Versant companies have achieved successful acquisitions or IPOs. For more information, please visit [www.versantventures.com](http://www.versantventures.com).

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# CIMEIO

## THERAPEUTICS

Transforming Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant and Adoptive  
Cell Therapies



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