



## Versant Ventures Launches Vector BioPharma AG

*-- Transformational precision gene delivery company launched out of Versant's Ridgeline Discovery Engine --*  
*-- Vector developing platform for precisely targeted delivery of high-capacity genetic payloads --*

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BASEL, Switzerland--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Versant Ventures today announced the debut of Vector BioPharma AG, a biopharmaceutical company developing a precision gene delivery platform that is devoid of viral genes. Versant has made a \$30 million Series A commitment to Vector, which is the most recent company to be launched out of the firm's Ridgeline Discovery Engine based in Basel, Switzerland.

Vector's platform overcomes the three main obstacles faced by other technologies in the gene delivery field: issues with tissue-specific delivery of payloads, limitations on the size of genetic cargo that can be packaged, and challenges associated with adverse immunogenic reactions.

"Our platform has significant advantages thanks to the unprecedented size of cargo that can be delivered, our proprietary capsid shielding technology and our ability to precisely target virtually any cell surface epitope," said CEO Lorenz Mayr, Ph.D. "We are confident that our approach will offer patients therapies with improved safety, efficacy and specificity."

### **A differentiated gene delivery platform**

Vector's platform was developed in the laboratory of Andreas Plückthun, Ph.D., a pioneer in the field of protein engineering and professor at the University of Zürich. There, he engineered a virus-like particle to achieve cell- and tissue-specific delivery of large genetic cargo with high specificity.

The platform combines high-capacity virus-like particles with designed, exogenous, high-avidity adapter proteins. The vectors are devoid of viral genes and thus offer reduced immunogenicity, while the adapters precisely direct delivery of DNA-encoding therapeutics to defined epitopes on target cells or tissues.

Finally, the viral capsid is engineered and shielded from the immune system, providing a safe and stable delivery system that carries complex and multiple gene cassettes with a large genome packaging capacity of up to 36 kb. This compares favorably with conventional viral gene delivery technologies such as AAV that are only capable of packaging 4.7 kb. The use of DNA for delivery enables tunable and regulatable expression of single or multiple genes in the same delivery vehicle.

Collectively, Vector's platform technology has the potential to transform the safety, efficacy, and specificity of biologics, cell and gene therapies.

"It is gratifying to see the work that started 10 years ago is now being translated into new therapies," said Dr. Plückthun. "I look forward to working closely with the Vector team to bring these treatments to patients."

"Versant has made several important investments in genetic medicine, including founding Crispr Therapeutics, and we believe that Vector represents a new wave of innovation in this space," said Markus Enzelberger, Ph.D., Partner at Versant and a Vector board member.

"We're thrilled to be working with Lorenz, Andreas and the team to advance Vector's rationally designed gene delivery technology," said Alex Mayweg, Ph.D., Managing Director at Versant and a Vector board member. "With its platform and growing pipeline, the company is positioned to fundamentally advance the field of genetic medicine and treat important diseases."

## **Leadership and Operating Plans**

Vector has built a strong leadership team and a diverse, international workforce of experts from a broad range of disciplines.

Lorenz Mayr, Ph.D., CEO. Dr. Mayr is an experienced executive from Bayer, Novartis, AstraZeneca and GE Healthcare, where he led a 2,000 member-strong R&D organization. Additionally, he holds Board positions at Phoremost, Mogrify and at Fraunhofer Institutes Stuttgart and Leipzig.

Nicholas Barbet, Ph.D., Head of Operations. Dr. Barbet previously was Head of Operations at Corlieve Therapeutics, which focused on AAV-mediated delivery of gene therapies for epilepsy, and prior to that held roles of increasing responsibility at Roche, most recently as Head of Business Operations and Project Leadership in the Neurosciences and Rare Diseases therapeutic area.

Sheena Smith, Ph.D., Head of Program Management. Dr. Smith was a post-doctoral student in the laboratory of Dr. Plückthun where she played a leading role in the development of Vector's platform.

Vector is located in Basel, Switzerland and has a 40-member staff that is expected to increase as the company expands its platform and pipeline of therapeutic candidates. This year, the company plans to have technical proof-of-concept data in key focus areas such as immuno-oncology and genome editing. In the first half of 2023, Vector expects to have *in vivo* data for its lead pipeline programs.

## **About Vector BioPharma**

Vector BioPharma is a biopharmaceutical company aiming to transform the safety, efficacy, and specificity of drug delivery, to improve treatments for patients. Incorporating cutting-edge platform technologies, from world-class academic research at the University of Zürich, Vector BioPharma uses engineered virus-like particles to achieve cell- and tissue-specific delivery and tunable expression of genes and regulators with unprecedented precision. The company is backed by Versant Ventures. For more information, please visit [www.vectorbiopharma.com](http://www.vectorbiopharma.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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