

Lilly buys into ion channels - again



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An early-stage deal from Lilly and Hydra Biosciences shows that interest in the transient receptor potential (TRP) superfamily is alive. Much research has been conducted into these ion channels over the past decade, though very few notable clinical success stories have emerged. Lilly has bought a preclinical TRPA-1 programme from Hydra; this ankyrin-like receptor family has received less attention than the related TRPV-1 (vanilloid) family, both of which are implicated in the transmission of pain and inflammation signals. They are also triggered by various external noxious stimuli: while TRPV-1 responds to capsaicin, for example, TRPA-1 is activated by wasabi. These channels are frequently co-expressed; notably, Lilly paid Glenmark \$45m up front for a TRPV-1 programme back in 2007, though the only asset to emerge, GRC 6211, seems to have been abandoned. Hydra's TRPA-1 programme will move into the clinic imminently, Lilly said, where the focus will be chronic pain syndromes. A look at the pipeline shows that the US pharma giant has few competitors here, in pain at least, and its decision to get back into TRP suggests that, despite previous disappointments, the company still sees some glimmers of potential.

Blocking TRPA-1 - selected projects

Product	Company	Details
Ongoing...		
HX-100	Hydra Biosciences	No active clinical trials; diabetic neuropathy and asthma phase I completed in 2016
TRPA1 Research Project	Ario Pharma	A TRPA-1 antagonist for chronic pain is in lead optimisation
On the shelf...		
GRC 17536	Glenmark	Abandoned after phase II testing for cough and diabetic neuropathy; licensed to Lilly
ODM-108	Orion	Abandoned in phase I
CB-625	Cubist	Abandoned in phase I after being tested in pain (Hydra-originated compound)

Source: EvaluatePharma, company statements.

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