

Conatus fluffs its second Encore



[Madeleine Armstrong](#)

Conatus and Novartis's Nash project emricasan has struck out for a second time with the failure of the [Encore-NF trial](#) in Nash fibrosis. But Conatus seems inexplicably determined to press on. The company admitted yesterday that emricasan, a caspase inhibitor, [did not work](#) in the earlier-stage Nash fibrosis patients enrolled in Encore-NF, but suggested it might still have utility in those who had progressed to cirrhosis. One problem with this theory is that the [Encore-PH trial](#), in Nash cirrhosis, [failed](#) in December. Still, Encore-PH homed in on patients who also had portal hypertension, so Conatus is clearly clinging to the hope of a different result in its next trial, [Encore-LF](#), in patients with decompensated Nash cirrhosis, the most severe form. The primary endpoint is event-free survival and data are due in mid-2019. Hopes are low, especially after the failed Encore-PH study found a worsening in hepatic venous pressure gradient in a subgroup of decompensated cirrhosis patients treated with 5mg and 25mg of emricasan – the doses being tested in Encore-LF. Conatus shares plunged 56% in premarket trading today. With not much else in its pipeline, it is understandable that the company wants to find a path forward. Novartis might not feel the same.

Conatus's pipeline programmes

Project	Setting	Trial	Status
Emricasan	Nash cirrhosis with portal hypertension	Encore-PH, NCT02960204	Failed, extension data due mid-2019
Emricasan	Nash fibrosis stage F1-F3	Encore-NF, NCT02686762	Failed
Emricasan	Decompensated Nash cirrhosis	Encore-LF, NCT03205345	Topline data due mid-2019
Emricasan	Combination with Novartis's tropifexor	-	Preclinical; decision to be made by Novartis on clinical development
CTS-2090	Inflammasome-related diseases	-	Preclinical

Source: Company website, [clinicaltrials.gov](#).

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