

Takeda spreads its bets in Huntington's



[Madeleine Armstrong](#)



The Japanese group pays \$120m for Anima's preclinical small-molecule approach.

Takeda already has one shot in Huntington's, [via a 2018 deal with Wave Life Sciences](#). The Japanese company put down another marker in the disease today by teaming up with the private Israeli company Anima Biotech, in a transaction worth \$120m up front.

Anima's approach is intriguing, but early: the group develops small molecules designed to control mRNA translation, with the ultimate goal of either increasing or decreasing levels of a target protein. In the case of its preclinical Huntington's project the aim is to decrease translation of the mutant huntingtin (HTT) protein without affecting the wild-type protein.

In this way, Anima's approach is [similar to that from Wave](#), though Wave uses not small molecules but antisense oligonucleotides. If Anima ultimately succeeds, its small-molecule approach could have cost and convenience advantages over Wave's projects and other antisense candidates in development, such as Roche and Ionis's tominersen.

However, proof of concept is still some way away: Anima's Huntington's asset is not set to reach the clinic for another three to four years, the company's chief executive, Yochi Slonim, told *Evaluate Vantage*.

At least now the smaller group will have Takeda's help to get there. The partnership is quite unusual in that the Japanese giant is contributing to preclinical development. "Many deals aren't true collaborations – they don't really get the pharma involved in the research in the way Anima is looking to do," Mr Slonim said.

If the project does make it to the clinic Takeda will then take it forward.

Multiple bidders

According to Mr Slonim, Anima's Huntington's project had drawn interest from multiple potential partners, but the company chose Takeda for its "breadth of expertise" in the disease.

Could the Anima deal mean that Takeda's enthusiasm for Wave's assets has cooled? Mr Slonim does not think so: "Takeda is setting itself up to be the leader in this field, and I think it wants to have many strategies."

In any case, [this quarter will see more data from Wave](#) that could determine whether Takeda opts into its projects.

Meanwhile, Takeda's deal with Anima, which could be worth up to \$2.4bn in total, also covers two more

undisclosed targets in neurology; Mr Slonim would not give more details, but said the focus would be on genetically defined disorders.

And Takeda has an option to broaden the collaboration with up to three more unnamed targets, also in neurology.

One thing is clear: Anima's Tau-targeting Alzheimer's project is not covered by the agreement.

The latest collaboration adds to a [2018 agreement between Anima and Lilly](#), for which the Israeli group received \$30m up front, covering undisclosed targets in neuroscience.

The Huntington's disease landscape

Project	Company	Description	Status	2026e indication sales (\$m)
VX15	Vaccinex	Semaphorin 4D antibody	Phase II Signal study failed in Sep 2020 but development continues	1,091*
Tominersen	Roche/Ionis	Huntingtin antisense oligonucleotide	Phase III Generation HD1 trial to read out 2022	546
AMT-130	Uniqure	MicroRNA targeting huntingtin gene	Phase I/II , initial data due YE 2021	282
WVE-120101	Wave Life Sciences	Stereopure huntingtin antisense oligonucleotide	Phase I/II Precision-HD1 data due Q1 2021	239
WVE-120102	Wave Life Sciences	Stereopure huntingtin antisense oligonucleotide	Phase I/II Precision-HD2 data due Q1 2021	179

*Most forecasts made before *Signal trial failure*. Source: EvaluatePharma.

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