

## No giving up on degradation for Novartis



[Jacob Plieth](#)

The growing field of protein degradation already featured Novartis as a minor player, and today the Swiss group dipped another toe in the water. An early research tie-up with a private UK biotech, Dunad Therapeutics, will see oral covalent and protein-degrading small molecules developed against up to four targets. The deal involves a \$24m up-front fee plus an undisclosed equity stake that will see Novartis join Epidarex Capital and Biogeneration Ventures as a key investor of Dunad, which was founded last year. If the signing fee looks small compared with other recent deals it pales into insignificance against the \$1.5bn Bayer handed across in August to buy the private protein degradation company Vividion. Back [in 2017 Novartis teamed up with the University of California, Berkeley](#) to deploy small molecules attached to a complex that tags a targeted protein for degradation. The most clinically advanced protein degraders are the Serds in breast cancer, an area in which [Radius recently scored a pivotal success that could lead to a 2022 filing](#). Novartis's own Serd, LSZ102, yielded an objective response rate of just 1% as monotherapy at Asco 2020, and its [study was recently terminated](#).

## Targeted protein degradation: selected small players\*

Company	Valuation	Notable deals/progress in protein degradation
Vividion	Bought for up to \$2bn by Bayer; had raised \$271m in VC cash since 2017	Preclinical; 2019 Roche discovery deal (\$135m up front); 2018 Celgene discovery deal (\$110m up front)
Arvinas	Market cap \$4.7bn (Nasdaq listed)	Licensed ph2 ARV-471 to Pfizer for \$650m up front (proof-of-concept data Q4 2021); 2019 Bayer deal (incl agriculture applications) for \$110m up front
Kymera	\$3.2bn market cap (Nasdaq listed)	Irak4 degrader KT-474 in ph1, being developed under broad deal with Sanofi (\$150m up front)
C4 Therapeutics	\$2.2bn market cap (Nasdaq listed)	IKZF1/3 degrader CFT7455 in ph1; 2016 discovery deal with Roche extended in 2019
Nurix	\$1.5bn market cap (Nasdaq listed)	BTK degrader NX-2127 in ph1; 2020 Sanofi deal (\$55m up front); 2019 Gilead deal (\$45m up front)
Monte Rosa Therapeutics	\$1.1bn market cap (Nasdaq listed)	Preclinical
Olema	\$1.1bn market cap (Nasdaq listed)	OP-1250 in ph1/2, future combo with Ibrance
Radius	\$1bn market cap (Nasdaq listed)	Full pivotal data on Menarini-partnered elacestrant due at SABCS, Dec 2021
Roivant	Floated via Spac, market cap \$480m	Bought Silicon Therapeutics to boost platform for \$450m in stock
Seed Therapeutics	Beyondspring subsidiary	2020 discovery deal with Lilly (\$10m up front)
Cullgen	Raised \$81m in VC cash since 2018	Plans IND later this year for TRK protein degrader CG001419
Plexium	Raised \$63m in VC cash since 2019	Preclinical
Lycia Therapeutics	Launched in 2020 with \$50m VC cash; \$70m series B Sep 2021	Preclinical; 2021 Lilly discovery deal (\$35m up front); 2019 Roche discovery deal (\$135m up front); 2018 Celgene discovery deal (\$110m up front)
Mission Therapeutics	Raised \$184m in VC cash (incl from Pfizer Venture) since 2011	Research deal with Abbvie over deubiquitylating enzymes to treat Alzheimer's and Parkinson's
Frontier Medicines	Raised \$155m in VC cash since 2019	Preclinical; 2020 discovery deal with Abbvie (\$55m up front)
Cedilla Therapeutics	\$56m series A Apr 2018; \$83m series B Oct 2021	Preclinical; ongoing degrader work unclear
Dunad Therapeutics	\$6.9m series A Mar 2021	Preclinical; 2021 Novartis discovery deal (\$24m up front + equity)

*Note: \*not exhaustive, and excludes big pharma players; this list was updated to remove Palleon Pharmaceuticals, which is not involved in protein degradation. Source: Evaluate Pharma & company statements.*

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