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Convelo Therapeutics, founded on discoveries made at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, launches publicly

By Lydia Coutré

Convelo Therapeutics is launching publicly on Wednesday, July 25, after working in stealth mode with a mission to discover and develop a new class of medicines for neurological disease characterized by the loss of the protective Myelin coating around nerve cells, according to a news release.

The loss of this coating occurs in a range of neurological diseases, including multiple sclerosis (MS).

The Cleveland company is founded on seminal scientific discoveries made in the laboratories of Paul Tesar and Drew Adams at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine.

Their most recent work was published online July 25 in the journals *Nature* and *Nature Methods*. It identified a central molecular pathway for stimulating the regeneration of new myelinating cells in the central nervous system.

The research published in *Nature* provides new understanding about how drugs can repair damaged brain cells that cause disability in patients with MS. It suggests that new drug targets and potent early-stage drug candidates could lead to regenerative medicines for debilitating neurological diseases, according to a news release.

The research published in *Nature Methods* demonstrates how to grow in laboratory dishes brain "organoids, which are self-organizing mini spheres that contain all the major cell types found in the human cerebral cortex," according to a release.

"The discovery of agents that can restore myelin represents a new therapeutic paradigm for patients with neurodegenerative diseases characterized by loss of myelin," said Derrick Rossi, who has been appointed president and CEO of Convelo Therapeutics.

Before Convelo, Rossi was on the faculty at Harvard Medical School and the Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology at Harvard University. Rossi — who has co-founded Moderna Therapeutics, Magenta

Therapeutics and Intellia Therapeutics — also has served as an investigator at Boston Children's Hospital, where his lab was focused on stem cell biology and regenerative medicine, according to the release.

Within CWRU's med school, Tesar is an associate professor in the Department of Genetics and Genome Sciences and the Dr. Donald and Ruth Weber Goodman Professor of Innovative Therapeutics. Adams is an assistant professor of the Department of Genetics and Genome Sciences, the Thomas F. Peterson Jr. Professor of Novel Therapeutics, and the Director of Small Molecule Drug Development Core.

Along with Tesar, Adams and Rossi, Convelo's other co-founder is Dr. Steven Landau, who has been named chief of development for Convelo

A group of private investors — managed by Bill Sanford, chairman of Convelo's board of directors — led a \$7.8 million financing effort. Convelo has also executed an exclusive worldwide license agreement with CWRU, including an intellectual property portfolio related to stem cell screening systems, remyelination platforms and drug candidates

"We have a group of investors that believes deeply in the Convelo Therapeutics mission and is fully committed to seeing the company develop important new treatments for patients suffering from severe neurological disorders," said Sanford, executive founder and retired chairman and CEO of STERIS Corporation. "Convelo has an outstanding team and academic partners in place to develop first-in-class remyelinating therapies."

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