

July 30, 2019 03:06 PM

## CWRU spinout Convelo partners with San Francisco company to develop medicines for neurological disorders

LYDIA COUTRÉ  



Paul Tesar

Biotechnology company Convelo Therapeutics has entered into a strategic partnership with Genentech to develop new therapeutic drugs to repair damaged myelin insulation on nerve cells for patients suffering from neurological disorders, such as multiple sclerosis.

**Convelo Therapeutics**, a Cleveland biotech company, has entered into a strategic partnership with San Francisco-based company Genentech to develop new therapeutic drugs to repair damaged myelin insulation on nerve cells for patients suffering from neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis, according to a news release.

Through the partnership, Convelo will receive an undisclosed upfront payment and research support from **Genentech**, a biotechnology company pursuing groundbreaking science to discover and develop medicines for people with serious and life-threatening diseases. The support will allow Convelo to expand its operations in Cleveland, according to the release. Details on that expansion were not immediately available. Genentech will retain an exclusive option to acquire all outstanding stock of Convelo for an additional undisclosed payment and downstream milestones.

Founded in 2016, Convelo is based on the research findings of Paul Tesar and Drew Adams at the **Case Western Reserve University** School of Medicine.

"The strategic partnership between Convelo Therapeutics — a CWRU spinout company — and Genentech is another example of the scientific prowess to be found here in Cleveland," said Pamela B. Davis, dean and vice president for medical affairs of the School of Medicine, in a prepared statement. "The innovative approaches to curing disease now being developed by our researchers promise to help transform this city into a biotech hub for the region."

Convelo uses a new approach to unlock the capacity of the nervous system to regenerate new myelinating cells from stem cells, according to the release.

Myelin is the covering that protects and insulates nerve cells to increase the transmission of electrical signals between nerve cells. Loss of the myelin sheath disrupts signals between the brain and other parts of the body, resulting in uncoordinated movement, loss of reflexes and disability, according to the release.

"Our approach can identify druglike molecules with the highest potential to stimulate the replacement of myelin in disorders such as multiple sclerosis," said Tesar, professor of the Department of Genetics and Genome Sciences and the Dr. Donald and Ruth Weber Goodman Professor of Innovative Therapeutics, in a prepared statement. "The ultimate goal is to create a new class of medicines that leverage the regenerative capacity of the central nervous system."

The exclusive worldwide collaboration with Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, aims to help speed the discovery and development of drugs that repair demyelinated nerve cells.

The original technology developed in Tesar's and Adams' laboratories was supported by a partnership between CWRU School of Medicine and the university's technology transfer office, as well as by the Council to Advance Human Health, which provides industry advice from CWRU alumni and funding to accelerate promising technologies, according to the release.

Located within Cleveland's [BioEnterprise](#) incubator space, Convelo is led by a management team based in Boston and San Francisco directed by president and CEO Derrick Rossi.

Convelo's founding was also supported by Cleveland Convelo Holdings LLC, a group of predominantly Cleveland-based investors managed by Bill Sanford, who is the executive founder and retired chairman and CEO of STERIS Corp. and trustee emeritus of CWRU, according to the release.

Inline Play

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