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**Venebio Group awarded \$1.5 million NIH grant to develop new technology to combat opioid overdose epidemic**

RICHMOND, Virginia, October 1, 2016 – Venebio Group LLC, a Richmond, Virginia based life sciences research consultancy, announced today that it has been awarded a research grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The \$1.5 million grant is a Direct-to-Phase-II Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Grant and is aimed at addressing the continued opioid epidemic in the United States. Specifically, under the grant, Venebio will refine and finalize the development of its Venebio Opioid Advisor™ algorithm. Venebio Opioid Advisor is a clinical decision support tool that automatically extracts demographic, clinical, and medication information from electronic medical records to obtain a personalized risk score for each patient. This allows clinicians to identify patients at elevated risk for life-threatening prescription opioid-related overdose, thereby supporting safer prescribing and appropriate risk management.

“We are grateful to the National Institute on Drug Abuse for recognizing the critical and time-sensitive nature of the project and for making available the Direct-to-Phase-II mechanism for this work,” said Maciek Sasinowski, MD, PhD, who will serve as the Principal Investigator on this project. “This project has the potential to significantly reduce the number of opioid overdose events, saving thousands of lives and lowering healthcare costs.”

Over the last two decades, unintentional prescription opioid-related overdose has emerged as a major public health threat in the United States. This increasingly common, yet preventable, cause of death among users of prescription opioids is partly due to a substantial expansion in prescribing opioid analgesics to manage acute and chronic pain conditions. In 2012, 259 million opioid prescriptions were written in the U.S. and within any given year during the past five, 15% of the U.S. population filled at least one opioid prescription. U.S. opioid analgesic poisoning- or overdose-related

deaths have more than quadrupled from 4,030 in 1999 to 18,893 in 2014 and parallel the striking increase in prescription opioid sales and consumption.

In response to the public health threat posed by the opioid overdose epidemic, Venebio Group developed the Opioid Advisor clinical decision support system to support safer opioid prescribing. The tool provides an evidence-based, real-time, quantitative estimate of a patient's likelihood of experiencing a life-threatening opioid emergency in the next six months. Opioid Advisor also characterizes the patient's specific risk factor profile and provides individualized, evidence-based risk mitigation interventions for the prescriber and patient.

During the performance period of the NIDA grant, Venebio and its clinical collaborators will prospectively validate the tool in a clinical study and develop content to guide risk-mitigation strategies and educate health care professionals and patients to improve the safety and clinical management of patients treated with opioids.

Lenn Murrelle, CEO of Venebio Group, said, "We are especially enthused about this project as it builds on Venebio's four year-long effort to reduce opioid-related harm." Murrelle estimated that the NIDA-funded research will take another 18 – 24 months, but added, "Venebio is actively seeking research partner sites for the upcoming pilot studies. These sites can be traditional primary care practices, pain management clinics, orthopedic practices, hospital emergency rooms or any other healthcare site that regularly dispenses opioid prescriptions and has access to patient EMRs."

*Venebio is a privately held research consultancy that provides cost-effective, custom solutions for complex life sciences problems. By integrating the expertise of a global network of scientists in a broad range of biomedical fields, Venebio delivers comprehensive project management and start-to-finish problem solving in genetic and molecular epidemiology, pharmacoepidemiology and pharmacovigilance, personalized medicine, bioinformatics, systems biology, biomarker discovery, and epidemiologic literature reviews and analysis.*

*Venebio's comprehensive services are offered to pharmaceutical companies, biotechnology and medical device companies, healthcare organizations, academic research centers, law firms, government entities and NGOs. Venebio also identifies, develops and commercializes predictive healthcare algorithms such as Venebio Opioid Advisor™ and aRx Statin Advisor®.*

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