

# AQILION

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## Press release

### **Aqilion announces pre-clinical licensing and strategic research collaboration agreement with Merck**

**AQILION AB (“Aqilion”) today announced an exclusive license and strategic research collaboration with Merck to discover, develop and commercialize small molecule inhibitors of the transforming growth factor- $\beta$ -activated kinase 1 (TAK1) protein. Merck will make an upfront cash payment of EUR 10 million to Aqilion. In addition, Aqilion is eligible to receive potential development and commercialization milestones up to over EUR 950 million and tiered royalties on worldwide net sales.**

The collaboration builds on Aqilion's extensive experience and know-how in the discovery of selective TAK1 inhibitors (the Alnitak program) together with Merck's industry leading expertise in drug discovery and development. The proprietary inhibitors are the result of Aqilion's inhouse drug discovery efforts. TAK1 is currently thought to be a central mediator for various inflammatory signals. The research collaboration will aim to develop first-in-class and differentiated TAK1 therapeutics in a broad range of autoimmune and inflammatory disease indications, including neurological diseases.

During the collaboration, Aqilion will be responsible for the design and synthesis of novel small molecule TAK1 inhibitors while Merck will lead preclinical pharmacology and biology studies.

“We are delighted and proud to announce this collaboration with Merck as it validates our business strategy of generating highly innovative discovery projects in combination with pro-active business development and early deal-making”, says Sarah Fredriksson, CEO of Aqilion. “We are looking forward to working with Merck as this will speed up the process of bringing novel effective treatments to conditions with high unmet medical needs.”

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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#### **About Aqilion**

Aqilion is a biotech company that focuses on developing new innovative treatments for diseases caused by chronic inflammation and dysfunctional immune reactions such as autoimmune diseases. The company is mainly active in the early phases of drug discovery, from idea to early clinical development.

Aqilion combines its experience from major pharmaceutical companies with the drive and entrepreneurship of small growth companies. With solid experience in business development in innovative biotech and pharmaceutical companies, the company's experienced team and Board of Directors have successfully navigated the process from drug discovery to market.

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