



GABA Therapeutics and ATAI Life Sciences Partner to Develop a Novel GABA Modulator for the Treatment of Mood Disorders

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NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. and BERLIN, Sept. 20, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, [GABA Therapeutics](#), a biotech company focused on the treatment of mood disorders, and [ATAI Life Sciences](#), a global biotech company builder working on paradigm shifting interventions for unmet needs in the mental health space, announced a partnership to develop a novel compound that promises efficacy across a spectrum of mood disorders, particularly anxiety and depression.

GABA Therapeutics' lead compound, [GRX-917](#), is a deuterated version of etifoxine, a safe and effective anxiolytic medication approved in approximately 40 countries with rapid onset and efficacy comparable to leading benzodiazepines like alprazolam (Xanax™) and lorazepam (Ativan™). In contrast to these and other benzodiazepines, however, more than 30 years of clinical experience with etifoxine suggest that GRX-917 is unlikely to produce serious side effects like sedation, amnesia, tolerance or physical dependence.

"GABA's work with GRX-917 is critical for addressing the needs of millions of people living with treatment resistant mental illnesses," said Florian Brand, CEO & Co-Founder, ATAI Life Sciences. "By providing a safe way to meaningfully alleviate anxiety, not only will we improve peoples' quality of life, we'll also help them to better engage with their care providers."

Notably, etifoxine is thought to achieve its anxiolytic activity by increasing central levels of neurosteroids, endogenous compounds (e.g. allopregnanolone) with potent antidepressant, neuroprotective, neurotrophic and anti-inflammatory properties, thereby affording GRX-917 the potential to treat a broad range of CNS diseases. With an improved pharmacokinetic profile that enables less frequent and lower dosing regimens, GRX-917 represents a leap forward for patients seeking to manage their anxiety acutely, safely and reliably.

The Series A investment of up to \$15.5 million will fund the program through a Phase 2a proof-of-concept study.

"We are very pleased to partner with the team at ATAI," said [Dr. Ian J. Massey](#), CEO, GABA. "They are building a world-class portfolio of mental health companies and GRX-917's potential to address the immense unmet medical need of unmanaged anxiety makes it a natural addition. We are grateful to have the funding and support of ATAI to drive forward this important program."

"We are thrilled to partner with GABA and will fully support all efforts to bring GRX-917 to patients as quickly as possible," added Christian Angermayer, Founder, ATAI Life Sciences.

About ATAI Life Sciences

ATAI Life Sciences AG is a global biotech platform and company builder founded by Christian Angermayer. Based in Berlin, London and New York, its vision is to cure mental health disorders, enabling people to live healthier and happier lives. www.atai.life

About GABA Therapeutics

GABA Therapeutics is a California based biotechnology company focused on developing its lead compound GRX-917 for anxiety, depression and a broad range of neurological disorders. GRX-917 has the potential to become front-line therapy for anxiety and has composition-of-matter patent protection until 2036. Moreover, preclinical studies using etifoxine have demonstrated efficacy in a broad range of other neurological disorders, including pain, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and Alzheimer's disease.

For more detailed information on GABA Therapeutics, visit www.gabarx.com.

About Anxiety

Anxiety, which is frequently comorbid with depression, is the largest mental health issue in North America. It is estimated that one third of the North American adult population experiences anxiety issues, yet only one third of sufferers receive treatment, of whom only 10% experience any form of remission. This is largely due to limitations in current therapies. In 2018, there were approximately 140 million prescriptions of anxiety medications in the United States⁽²⁾.

(1) anxietycentre.com

(2) IQVIA market data – 2018

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