

## Bayer builds position in gene therapy's AAV space. Acquires AskBio for 2-4 billion USD

**On October 26, 2020, Bayer announced that it is acquiring the American gene therapy company Asklepios BioPharmaceutical, Inc. (AskBio) for \$2 billion with the possibility of an additional \$2 billion for AskBio in future milestone payments. The deal between Bayer and AskBio is the latest in a number of examples where big pharma companies acquire interesting companies in the cell and gene therapy field.**

AskBio's industry-leading AAV-based gene therapy platform has already proven successful in the development and commercialization of AAV based gene therapies. The company's project portfolio includes drug candidates developed for AAV-based gene therapeutic treatment of neuromuscular diseases and diseases related to the central nervous system as well as cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. AskBio's projects include the development of treatments for Pompe disease, Parkinson's disease and congestive heart failure. AskBio has also outlicensed clinical candidates for hemophilia and Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

### **CombiGene is an early customer of AskBio's joint venture company Viralgen, which specializes in suspension production of AAV-based gene therapies**

In addition to the development of gene therapies, AskBio is also actively involved in the manufacture of AAV-based gene therapies through its Spanish joint venture company Viralgen, which received GMP certification on its new production facility in Spain 2019. CombiGene is an early customer of Viralgen and the two companies recently started the first large-scale production of CombiGene's drug candidate CG01, which is being developed for the treatment of drug-resistant focal epilepsy.

*"The deal between Bayer and AskBio shows once again how highly big pharma values the opportunities in the field of gene therapy. The fact that the deal is made within the AAV space – the very area of gene therapy in which CombiGene is positioned – makes the transaction particularly interesting. The fact that Viralgen, the gene therapy manufacturer we have chosen for our CG01 project, as a joint venture to AskBio, is part of the deal makes it all the more exciting and shows that CombiGene is in the midst of the very dynamic development of future gene therapies,"* **CombiGene's CEO Jan Nilsson** comments.

### **About Viralgen**

Viralgen is a CDMO born as a joint venture between AskBio and Columbus Venture Partners, combining decades of technology and drug development experience in multiple platforms to support best-in-class service offerings to the gene therapy market.

Viralgen was created in 2017 to respond to the unmet need for manufacturing of gene therapies, with the goal to help broaden access to these life-saving therapeutics and to contribute to the advancement of health and human welfare around the world. We specialize in the production of rAAV viral vectors, and have built an optimized facility in San Sebastian, Spain that maximizes throughput and efficiency of our proprietary Pro10™ suspension manufacturing platform, enabling industry-leading scalability, reproducibility, and speed to market.

Through our superior technology platform, we deliver industry-leading titers and cGMP-certified quality for all AAV serotypes to our client partners, optimize the cost-of-goods, and accelerate clinical development and commercialization of life-saving genetic medicines.

Viralgen new commercial facility will be in production by the end of 2021 in San Sebastian (Spain).

## Contacts

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## About CombiGene

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CombiGene's vision is to provide patients affected by severe life-altering diseases with the prospect of a better life through novel gene therapies.

CombiGene's business concept is to develop effective gene therapies for severe life-altering diseases where adequate treatment is currently lacking. Development assets are sourced from an external research network and developed to achieve clinical proof of concept. Drug candidates for common diseases will be co-developed and commercialized through strategic partnerships, while the company may manage this process on its own for drugs targeting niched patient populations.

The company is public and listed on the Swedish marketplace Nasdaq First North Growth Market and the company's Certified Advisor is FNCA Sweden AB, +46 (0)852 80 03 99, [info@fnca.se](mailto:info@fnca.se).

*CombiGene's lead project CG01 has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 823282*

## Attachments

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