

## **AVI BioPharma Announces Key Leadership Appointments to Advance Capabilities in Drug Discovery, Research and Development**

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BOTHELL, WA, Oct 27, 2010 (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX) --

AVI BioPharma, Inc. (NASDAQ: AVII), a developer of RNA-based therapeutics, announced today three key leadership appointments supporting the expansion of its drug discovery, research and development capabilities.

Graham Johnson, Ph.D., has joined AVI as its Senior Vice President, Preclinical Development and Research. Additionally, Patrick Iversen, Ph.D., has been appointed Senior Vice President of Research and Innovation, and Ryszard Kole, Ph.D., has been appointed Senior Vice President and an AVI Distinguished Scientist. With these appointments, AVI seeks to further accelerate its leading scientific expertise and focus efforts on continuing to expand and fully leverage its technology platforms to discover and develop innovative RNA-based therapeutics for rare and infectious diseases.

Graham Johnson, Ph.D.

Graham Johnson, Ph.D., joins AVI as Senior Vice President, Preclinical Development and Research. He has overall responsibility for pre-clinical development and research, including research biology and chemistry initiatives. He will report to the Company's Chief Executive Officer.

Dr. Johnson brings to AVI more than 30 years' experience in the design, discovery and development of novel therapeutics, including an extensive background in infectious diseases and neuroscience. He has joined AVI after holding increasingly senior roles at several companies, including a 10-year tenure at Bristol-Myers Squibb, where he departed as Vice President, Discovery Chemistry, for Connecticut and Canada, and oversaw approximately 135 scientists. Most recently, he was President of NuPharmAdvise LLC, a pharmaceutical consulting company. Other past positions include Chief Research Officer of Rib-X Pharmaceuticals and increasingly senior positions at Hoechst UK and Parke-Davis. Dr. Johnson is an inventor on 54 patents and has co-authored more than 60 peer-reviewed publications. He has also authored multiple review articles and is a regular speaker at scientific conferences. Dr. Johnson received his B.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, and was then awarded a Fulbright Senior Fellowship for postdoctoral studies in the U.S., where he joined Professor Sir Jack Baldwin's research group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This was followed by two years of additional postdoctoral studies with Professor Sir Derek Barton, first at Imperial College and then at the Research Institute for Medicine and Chemistry. Dr. Johnson was a steering committee member and scientific advisor for the Spinomuscular Atrophy Project, a National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke-sponsored collaborative program to accelerate therapeutics development for spinal muscular atrophy. He is an Independent Observer for the European Union's Innovative Medicine Initiative and sits on the scientific advisory board for Galenea Corporation.

"We are very happy to welcome Graham to AVI, and we appreciate the tremendous amount of experience he brings from both large and small pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies in bridging research and development," said J. David Boyle II, AVI's Interim President and Chief Executive Officer as well as Chief Financial Officer. "At a time when we are poised for significant advancement across multiple programs, I am confident Graham's background and leadership will prove invaluable to AVI as we continue to build recognition of our leading RNA-based therapeutics programs."

Patrick Iversen, Ph.D.

Patrick Iversen, Ph.D., has been appointed Senior Vice President of Research and Innovation. In his new role Dr. Iversen will have expanded responsibility for the identification and advancement of new drug discovery initiatives and the development of novel therapeutic applications of AVI's RNA-based technology. The appointment as AVI's innovation officer is in recognition of Dr. Iversen's role as a leading innovator of RNA-based science over the previous two decades and his ongoing contributions to the advancement of AVI's technology platforms and programs. He will report to the company's Chief Executive Officer.

Over the last 21 years, Dr. Iversen has been a leading innovator in the research and development of RNA-based therapeutics. In 1992, he prepared the first IND submitted to the FDA for systemic use of an antisense compound in humans and was the first to conduct a clinical trial using a systemically administered antisense drug candidate in patients. His work and expertise have also

been instrumental in the advancement of the Phosphorodiamidate morpholino oligomer (PMO) based antisense backbone chemistry, especially with regards to AVI's PMOplus(TM) backbone. He has published extensively on a host of medical and scientific subjects with more than 200 papers appearing in peer-reviewed literature, and he has delivered more than 100 presentations to the academic community. Dr. Iversen is an inventor on over 71 patents. Prior to joining AVI in 1997 as Senior Vice President of Research and Development, he was a Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center from 1987 through 1997. Dr. Iversen has served on five different NIH study sections over the past 20 years and as a consultant and advisor to a variety of companies and institutions including Glaxo Inc., Innovir Pharmaceuticals, Lynx Therapeutics and Isis Pharmaceuticals. He completed his undergraduate studies at Westminster College in 1976 and was honored as a distinguished alum in 2010. Dr. Iversen earned his Ph.D. in the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Utah in 1984 with emphasis in biochemical toxicology under the direction of Michael Franklin. He subsequently completed postdoctoral training at the Eppley Institute for Cancer in 1987 with the support of a National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health and under the direction of Drs. Edward Bresnick and Ronald Hines.

"With the appointment of Pat to this important new position, we seek to more aggressively leverage his leading scientific expertise and further enable his efforts on continuing to expand and fully apply our technology platforms to discover and develop innovative RNA-based therapeutics for rare and infectious diseases," Boyle said.

Ryszard Kole, Ph.D.

In addition to his position as Senior Vice President, Ryszard Kole, Ph.D. has been appointed an AVI Distinguished Scientist. Dr. Kole's appointment reflects and acknowledges his 30-year career of scientific leadership and pioneering achievements in the field of alternative splicing and RNA research. In his new role, Dr. Kole will serve as a key scientific liaison with both commercial and academic institutions around the world, and he will continue to support the advancement of AVI drug research and development programs. He will continue report to the company's Chief Executive Officer.

Over the last 25 years, Dr. Kole has been a leading pioneer in the use of oligonucleotides for the modulation of RNA splicing, an inventor on key patent families in the field, and the author of more than 100 publications in leading scientific journals. He has given over 100 invited presentations to the scientific community. Prior to AVI, he served as President and Chief Scientific Officer of Ercole Biotech Inc. from its founding until it was acquired by AVI in 2008. He was also a professor in the Department of Pharmacology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). While a faculty member at UNC, his work led to a discovery that splicing provides a novel target for gene-based therapies of numerous disorders, including genetic diseases, metabolic disorders and cancer. As a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Dr. Sidney Altman at Yale University, Dr. Kole provided early evidence that an RNA component is essential for the activity of a tRNA processing enzyme, RNase P. Working with Dr. Sherman Weissman at Yale University, he was first to demonstrate accurate splicing of human beta-globin pre-mRNA. Dr. Kole received his Ph.D. in Natural Sciences from the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland, where he now serves on a Scientific Advisory Board.

"Ryszard's appointment as an AVI Distinguished Scientist recognizes his stature as a leading scientist since the field of RNA research and alternative splicing was established," Boyle said. "In his new role, we are looking to Ryszard to continue to support and promote AVI's scientific leadership and the advancement of its RNA platforms and technologies. We additionally will look to Ryszard to act as a key resource in maximizing our opportunities to leverage those platforms and technologies."

About AVI BioPharma AVI BioPharma is focused on the discovery and development of novel RNA-based therapeutics for rare and infectious diseases, as well as other select disease targets. Applying pioneering technologies developed and optimized by AVI, the Company is able to target a broad range of diseases and disorders through distinct RNA-based mechanisms of action. Unlike other RNA-based approaches, AVI's technologies can be used to directly target both messenger RNA (mRNA) and precursor messenger RNA (pre-mRNA) to either down-regulate (inhibit) or up-regulate (promote) the expression of targeted genes or proteins. By leveraging a highly differentiated RNA antisense-based technology platform, AVI has built a pipeline of potentially transformative therapeutic agents, including one in the clinical development stage for the treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

Editor's Note: Photographs available on request

SOURCE: AVI BioPharma, Inc.