

Proteris Biotech awarded federal grant to develop Protearin for dry eye

Pasadena, California, USA

April 25, 2016

The National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded a Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant R41-EY025890 to [Proteris Biotech, Inc.](#) (PB) to develop innovative technology for the treatment of dry eye. The ultimate goal is a new U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved biotherapeutic called **Protearin**. The grant will begin May 1, 2016.

Dry eye, characterized by inadequate hydration and lubrication of the ocular surface, is a group of disorders that affects ~5 million people over the age of 50 in the USA today. Dry eye conditions are brought on by aging, eye surgery or environmental exposure. Symptoms include pain, burning, itching, redness, sensitivity to light and other discomfort. If left untreated, severe cases may result in vision loss due to corneal scarring.

Protearin is based on the natural glycoprotein clusterin. PB's collaborators at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles showed in a preclinical model that clusterin prevents and ameliorates ocular surface disease by a remarkable sealing mechanism.

"At the present time, only a single FDA-approved drug exists for the treatment of dry eye", observes PB's Chief Scientific Officer Dr. M. Elizabeth Fini. "Most drugs currently under development seek to target the inflammatory response that initiates dry eye, but the character of this response may differ in the various disease subtypes. The innovation of Protearin is that it works downstream of inflammation, targeting the ocular surface damage common to all forms of dry eye."

The mission of the NIH STTR program is to support scientific excellence and technological innovation through the investment of Federal research funds in critical American priorities to build a strong national economy. A feature of the STTR program is the requirement for the small business to formally collaborate with an academic institution. PB will subcontract a portion of the work under the new grant to Shinwu Jeong at the [USC Institute for Genetic Medicine](#). Dr. Jeong is also a USC Eye Institute researcher and an Assistant Professor of Research in the Department of Ophthalmology at USC.

"NIH grant applications are rigorously peer-reviewed in a highly competitive process", notes PB's Chief Executive Officer John C. Fini. "Award of this new grant provides independent validation of our vision for Protearin as a breakthrough therapeutic."

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Proteris Biotech, Inc. is a start-up biotechnology company located in Pasadena, California, USA. The company platform is therapeutic products that harness the body's natural response to stress.

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