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Ionis Pharma, AstraZeneca to advance new drug for NASH

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AstraZeneca will pay a $30 million license fee to Ionis. AstraZeneca will be responsible for further development and commercialization of Ionis's lead candidate



US-based Ionis Pharmaceuticals, the leader in antisense therapeutics, recently announced that it has licensed IONIS-AZ6-2.5-L_{Rx}, or AZD2693, to AstraZeneca following advancement of the drug into development.

The leading drug candidate is designed to inhibit an undisclosed target to treat patients with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). As per the terms, AstraZeneca will pay a $30 million license fee to Ionis. AstraZeneca will be responsible for further development and commercialization of IONIS-AZ6-2.5-L_{Rx}.

AstraZeneca and Ionis have a strategic alliance focused on leveraging antisense technology to discover and develop antisense therapies for cardiovascular, metabolic and renal diseases.

"This is the third drug to enter development under our strategic collaboration with AstraZeneca to discover drugs to treat cardiovascular, renal and metabolic diseases. IONIS-AZ6-2.5-L_{Rx} incorporates many of the advancements we have made in antisense technology, and is the second drug in our collaboration to incorporate both modifications,"said Brett P. Monia, chief operating officer, senior vice president of antisense drug discovery and translational medicine at Ionis Pharmaceuticals.

"We are pleased with how quickly we moved IONIS-AZ6-2.5-L_{Rx} from target validation into development, exemplifying the efficiency of our antisense platform. AstraZeneca has played a strategic role in advancing this program forward by providing

both preclinical and development expertise in NASH that has contributed to the rapid advance of this drug into development. We look forward to AstraZeneca moving this program swiftly into clinical testing and ultimately to the market," he added.

As IONIS-AZ6-2.5-L_{Rx} advances in development, Ionis may also receive up to $300 million in additional development and regulatory milestone payments, as well as tiered royalties up to the low teens from sales of the drug.