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Korean firm acquires hearing loss drug

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Pill to restore natural hearing moves one step closer to market



Hough Ear Institute (HEI), a nonprofit based in Oklahoma City, US is proud to announce that its pharmaceutical partner, Auditus LLC (Auditus), a wholly owned subsidiary of Otologic Pharmaceutics Inc. (OPI), has entered into an agreement with Oblato Inc. (Oblato), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Korean biotech company GtreeBNT. Oblato assumes exclusive rights to a drug known as NHPN-1010 to advance clinical research aimed at preserving and possibly restoring hearing.

HEI and the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF) jointly discovered the NHPN-1010 technology and licensed it to OPI for commercial development in 2010. OPI led a successful phase 1 clinical trial to demonstrate safety in 2015.

HEI continued to conduct research with the drug, and recently discovered that it has the ability to regenerate and reconnect damaged nerve endings on surviving hair cells, which was once thought to be irreversible.

As part of the agreement between Auditus and Oblato, Oblato is expected to initiate a phase 2 clinical trial to evaluate the potential of the drug to prevent and treat hearing loss. Follow-up studies may test efficacy for treating tinnitus and improving ability to understand speech in the presence of background noise.

Worldwide, 466 million people suffer from disabling hearing loss, one in seven individuals experience tinnitus and over 324,000 registered cochlear devices have been implanted. At this time, no drug treatment or cure exists for noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) or tinnitus.