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ASIA EDITION

UK Pharma firm invests $219M to scale up respiratory drug in China, Taiwan, HK, Macau

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Verona Pharma and Nuance Pharma enters strategic collaboration to develop Ensifentrine by leveraging up to $179 million in potential clinical, regulatory, and commercial milestone payments plus tiered double-digit royalties

Verona Pharma plc and Nuance Pharma Limited have entered into an agreement granting Nuance Pharma, a Shanghai-based specialty pharmaceutical company, the rights to develop and commercialize ensifentrine in Greater China (mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau).

Ensifentrine is an investigational, first-in-class, inhaled, dual inhibitor of the enzymes phosphodiesterase 3 and 4 ("PDE3" and "PDE4"). This dual inhibition enables it to combine both bronchodilator and anti-inflammatory effects in one compound. Verona Pharma is currently conducting a global Phase 3 program evaluating ensifentrine for the maintenance treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease ("COPD"), with sites in the US, Europe and South Korea.

Under the terms of the agreement, Verona Pharma has granted Nuance Pharma the exclusive rights to develop and commercialize ensifentrine in Greater China. In return, Verona Pharma will receive an upfront payment of $25 million in cash and an equity interest currently valued at $15 million in Nuance Biotech, the parent company of Nuance Pharma.

Verona Pharma is eligible to receive future milestone payments of up to $179 million that are triggered upon achievement of certain clinical, regulatory, and commercial milestones. Verona Pharma is also entitled to tiered double-digit royalties as a percentage of net sales in Greater China.

Nuance Pharma will be responsible for all costs related to clinical development and commercialization in Greater China. A joint steering committee will be established to ensure ensifentrine's clinical development in the region aligns with Verona Pharma's overall global development and commercialization strategy. Nuance Pharma intends to file a Clinical Trial Application with the China Food and Drug Administration later this year and begin clinical studies for the treatment of COPD in Greater China thereafter.