



***For Immediate Release***

**CALITHERA BIOSCIENCES CLOSES \$40 MILLION IN SERIES A FINANCING**

***Funding to Support Development of Novel Cancer Therapeutics***

***Announces Formation of Management Team***

**South San Francisco, CA – July 8, 2010** – Calithera Biosciences, a company developing novel oncology therapeutics, today announced the completion of a Series A financing totaling \$40 million. Morgenthaler Ventures led the financing with U.S. Venture Partners, Advanced Technology Ventures, Delphi Ventures and Mission Bay Capital also participating in the round. The capital will be used to support the company’s pioneering efforts to develop activators of caspases, the proteases that promote apoptotic cell death, for the treatment of cancer and other proliferative diseases.

“Promoting apoptosis in cancer cells is a validated approach to the treatment of cancer, as many oncology drugs on the market today are known to kill tumor cells by activating apoptotic pathways, albeit through indirect means,” said Susan Molineaux, Ph.D., co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Calithera. “By targeting caspases directly, we hope to develop agents that have broad utility across many types of cancer, with greater specificity than current treatments and the potential to overcome chemoresistance.”

Calithera’s technology was developed by and licensed from the laboratory of co-founder James Wells, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry in the University of California, San Francisco School of Pharmacy. Dr. Wells’s laboratory has successfully identified several novel compounds that selectively activate procaspases and trigger apoptosis in cancer cells. Proceeds from the financing will be used to advance one or more caspase activators through preclinical development and into Phase 1 clinical trials in cancer patients. In parallel, the company will expand its technology for targeting allosteric activating sites to other enzymes with therapeutic potential in cancer.

“Most drug discovery efforts are focused on identifying drugs that inhibit enzyme function,” said Dr. Wells. “But, interestingly, many cellular enzymes remain dormant until activated. In the case of caspases, they can be activated on demand by mimicking the natural process with small molecules.”

“I am excited about the novel chemical approach that Calithera is taking,” said Chris Christoffersen, Ph.D., of Morgenthaler Ventures and Chairman of the Calithera Board. “The technology to discover small molecules that target binding sites to activate, rather than inhibit, enzymes has the potential to be a powerful and broadly applicable approach to developing innovative therapies across many targets.”

### **Expert Leadership Team in Place**

The management team of Calithera brings to the company both deep scientific expertise and extensive experience in drug development.

Susan Molineaux, Ph.D., was most recently a founder and Chief Executive Officer of Proteolix, a company that developed proteasome inhibitors. Proteolix was in late-stage clinical trials with carfilzomib in multiple myeloma when Onyx Pharmaceuticals acquired the company in 2009 for \$851 million. Prior to forming Proteolix, Dr. Molineaux held leadership positions at Rigel Pharmaceuticals and Praecis Pharmaceuticals. Dr. Molineaux began her career as a scientist in the Immunology group at Merck.

Mark Bennett, Ph.D., Senior Vice President of Research at Calithera, was Vice President of Research at Proteolix. Previously, he was Director of Cell Biology at Rigel Pharmaceuticals. Prior to that, Dr. Bennett served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at University of California, Berkeley.

Eric Sjogren, Ph.D., Senior Vice President of Drug Discovery at Calithera, was most recently the Vice President and Head of Medicinal Chemistry at Roche, Palo Alto. He held a series of positions during his 15-year tenure at Roche. Prior to that, Dr. Sjogren was at Syntex for eight years.

Calithera’s Board of Directors includes Susan Molineaux, Ph.D., Chris Christoffersen, Ph.D., Larry Lasky, Ph.D., from U.S. Venture Partners, Jean George from Advanced Technology Ventures, Deepa Pakianathan, Ph.D., from Delphi Ventures, and James Wells, Ph.D.

### **About Caspases in Cancer**

The direct activation and targeting of caspases represents a novel approach to inducing apoptosis in cancer cells and may have utility across a broad range of cancer types while avoiding chemoresistance. Caspases are the proteases responsible for initiating apoptosis, or programmed cell death, in cancer cells. Cancer cells grow in an uncontrolled manner in part through their ability to develop mechanisms to resist apoptosis. Many classic cancer therapies (cytotoxic drugs and radiation therapy) work by inducing upstream pro-apoptotic pathways that then activate caspases to overcome this resistance.

### **About Calithera Biosciences**

Calithera Biosciences was founded in 2010, with core technologies licensed from the University of California, San Francisco, to develop novel therapeutic approaches to the treatment of cancer. The company is developing small molecules that directly activate caspases, the proteases responsible for initiating programmed cell death, or apoptosis, in cancer cells. Calithera plans to develop activators of additional enzymes as therapeutic agents for the treatment of cancer and other proliferative diseases. Located in South San Francisco, CA, Calithera Biosciences is privately held with backing from Morgenthaler Ventures, U.S. Venture Partners, Advanced Technology Ventures, Delphi Ventures and Mission Bay Capital. For more information, please visit [www.calithera.com](http://www.calithera.com).

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*Contacts:*

Susan M. Molineaux, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
Calithera Biosciences  
[info@calithera.com](mailto:info@calithera.com)

BCC Partners  
Karen L. Bergman or  
Michelle Corral  
650.575.1509  
415.794.8662