



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Saniona obtains research milestone from The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research**

**Saniona, a leading biotech company in the field of ion channels, today announces that it has reached the first research milestone for identifying new drug candidates for the treatment of Parkinson's disease, which is supported by the The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. The achieved milestone releases a payment of USD 175,862 (about SEK 1.5 million).**

In February 2016, Saniona announced that The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (MJFF) awarded Saniona a research grant of up to USD 590,700 (about SEK 5.2 million) to develop small-molecule modulators of nicotine receptors belonging to a subtype named alpha-6 and evaluate the feasibility of using these drug candidates for the treatment of Parkinson's disease.

Saniona has until now received a total of USD 351,724 (about SEK 3.1 million) under the grant from MJFF.

"It is well-documented that smokers are at lower risk of developing Parkinson's. The reason is probably that nicotine activates and protects the cells that degenerate in Parkinson's disease. But nicotine itself is not useful as a medicine because it is far too unspecific and has severe and obvious side effects. However, Saniona has identified subtype specific nicotine compounds that might provide a symptomatic and protective effect without the negative side effects of nicotine," says Jørgen Drejer, CEO of Saniona.

The Saniona research team is the first to present small molecules that specifically facilitate the function of nicotinic alpha-6 receptors, which mediate dopamine signalling. Should the project be successful, the next steps would be to accelerate this program towards lead optimization to identify a therapeutic candidate to be advanced into pre-clinical development for the possible initiation of Phase 1 clinical trials, which potentially could also be funded by MJFF.

#### **For more information, please contact**

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This information is information that Saniona (publ) is obliged to make public pursuant to the EU Market Abuse Regulation. The information was submitted for publication, through the agency of the contact person set out above, at 08:00 CET on October 20, 2016.

#### **About Saniona**

*Saniona is a research and development company focused on drugs for diseases of the central nervous system, autoimmune diseases, metabolic diseases and treatment of pain. The company has a significant portfolio of potential drug candidates at pre-clinical and clinical stage. The research is focused on ion channels, which makes up a unique protein class that enables and controls the passage of charged ions across cell membranes. Saniona has ongoing collaboration agreements with Boehringer Ingelheim GmbH, Upsher-Smith Laboratories, Inc., Productos Medix, S.A de S.V and Saniona's Boston based spinout Ataxion Inc., which is financed by Atlas Venture Inc. and Biogen Inc. Saniona is based in Copenhagen, Denmark, where it has a research center of high international standard. Saniona is listed at Nasdaq First North Premier and has about 4,400 shareholders. Pareto Securities is Certified Advisor for Saniona. The company's share is traded under the ticker SANION. Read more at [www.saniona.com](http://www.saniona.com).*



### **About Parkinson's disease**

Parkinson's disease is a chronic and progressive neurological disorder that is characterized by well-known motor symptoms including tremors, stiffness of limbs, slowness of movements, and difficulties with posture and balance. In addition to motor symptoms, many Parkinson's disease patients experience non-motor symptoms, including sleep disorders, sensory symptoms, depression and gastrointestinal symptoms.

It is the second most common neurological disorder and more than five million people worldwide live with this disease. Parkinson's disease is more common in people over 60 years of age, but the disease also afflicts people as young as in their late 20s. In healthy people, the motor system is regulated by nerve cells that communicate with each other using dopamine. In Parkinson's disease, dopamine-producing cells in the brain degenerate, affecting the entire central nervous system. This causes an impairment of communication between the cells leading to the loss of control of movements. Current Parkinson's treatments are only effective in managing symptoms of the disease. As the disease progresses and dopaminergic neurons continue to be lost, these drugs eventually become less effective at treating the symptoms.

### **About Nicotine alpha-6 modulators**

Nicotinic alpha-6 receptors exhibit an extremely localized expression, mainly confined to dopamine neurons. In these neurons, they are expressed on the nerve endings innervating a brain region named striatum, where they are important mediators of local regulation of dopamine signalling by the signalling molecule acetylcholine. The Saniona research team is the first to present selective allosteric modulators of nicotinic alpha-6 receptors and has furthermore demonstrated that these modulators increase the receptor sensitivity for acetylcholine. The identified nicotinic alpha-6 modulators have the potential to strengthen acetylcholine-mediated dopamine release at the nerve endings in striatum and thereby offer a novel approach to protect and counteract degeneration of dopamine neurons in Parkinson's disease patients.

### **About The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research**

As the world's largest non-profit funder of Parkinson's research, The Michael J. Fox Foundation is dedicated to accelerating a cure for Parkinson's disease and improved therapies for those living with the condition today. The Foundation pursues its goals through an aggressively funded, highly targeted research program coupled with active global engagement of scientists, Parkinson's patients, business leaders, clinical trial participants, donors and volunteers. In addition to funding more than \$525 million in research to date, the Foundation has fundamentally altered the trajectory of progress toward a cure. Operating at the hub of worldwide Parkinson's research, the Foundation forges ground-breaking collaborations with industry leaders, academic scientists and government research funders; increases the flow of participants into Parkinson's disease clinical trials with its online tool, Fox Trial Finder; promotes Parkinson's awareness through high-profile advocacy, events and outreach; and coordinates the grassroots involvement of thousands of Team Fox members around the world.