

# Press Release



## Sanofi-aventis Strengthens Commitment to Ophthalmology through Partnership with The Vision Institute

*- New Public Private Research Partnership  
in the Diagnosis, Prevention and Treatment of Ocular Diseases -*

**Paris, France - March 23, 2011** - Sanofi-aventis (EURONEXT: SAN and NYSE: SNY) announced today the official signing of a cooperation agreement between Fovea Pharmaceuticals, its Ophthalmology Division, and the **Vision Institute** (*Institut de la Vision*), one of the main eye disease research centers in Europe, for research in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of ocular diseases.

This agreement aims to set up a privileged partnership between sanofi-aventis and the Vision Institute on the model of translational R&D and to strengthen the collaboration of sanofi-aventis with the bodies constituting the Vision Institute, such as the **Pierre and Marie Curie University (UPMC)**, **INSERM**, the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research, and **CNRS**, the French National Center for Scientific Research.

This research partnership will allow sanofi-aventis to further develop its platform dedicated to ophthalmology, by broadening the range of expertises in promising areas, in order to bring innovative solutions to patients where unmet therapeutic needs remain, particularly in retinal diseases.

Under the terms of this 3-year agreement, sanofi-aventis will be given priority access to the technological platforms of the Vision Institute to conduct research activities and will support research and collaboration projects in particular in the area of regeneration of the optical nerve, vascular biology, inflammation and gene therapy in various eye tissues. Sanofi-aventis will be granted exclusive and worldwide rights to the results of the collaboration. In case of commercialization, sanofi-aventis would pay royalties to the members of the Vision Institute.

*"We are very pleased with the signing of this major contract which strengthens the collaboration of our Ophthalmology Division with the research teams of the Vision Institute.",* said Christopher A. Viehbacher, Chief Executive Officer of sanofi-aventis. *"This collaboration will encourage the sharing of technical expertise and know-how with the objective to deliver innovative therapies for people with visual impairment and supports our ambition to build a global offer in ophthalmology for patients."*

*"The ambition which motivated the creation of the Vision Institute was to bring together in one location scientists from academic and private research to share translational knowledge, from fundamental research to clinical development.",* said Pr. José-Alain Sahel, Director of the Vision Institute. *"I am delighted to see this agreement signed as it will give us the means to pursue our work with sanofi-aventis, which becomes our main industrial partner. Even if finding innovative treatments to help patients suffering from difficult-to-treat retinal diseases is particularly challenging, I am convinced that we shall succeed."*

*“This agreement is emblematic as it is based on a wide and deep cooperation”, said Pr. Jean-Charles Pomerol, President of the UPMC. “It also underlines UPMC, INSERM and CNRS’ strong commitment to research for the treatment of ocular diseases and the capacity of the Vision Institute to work with leading industrial partners.”*

### **About ocular diseases**

Ocular diseases affect the visual perception and can sometimes lead to blindness for some patients affected by serious forms of diseases. In industrial and emerging countries, three specific diseases which can cause blindness are listed by the WHO as priorities<sup>1</sup>: diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The incidence of diabetic retinopathy is increasing as the number of diabetics grows. In 2010, according to the WHO, around 221 million people were suffering from diabetes worldwide, one of the major causes of visual impairment. As for glaucoma, it has become a Public Health concern because of the difficulties in making an early diagnosis of the disease and maintaining lifelong treatment. Finally, AMD, the leading cause of visual impairment in industrial countries, should increase in the next coming years because of the ageing of the population.

### **About the Vision Institute**

Created in 2008 within the Quinze-Vingts National Ophthalmology Hospital, one of the most important ophthalmological centres in Europe, and steered by Pr José-Alain Sahel, the Vision Institute brings together on the same site actors of the fundamental, clinical and industrial research, on 6,000 sq.m entirely dedicated to research on human eye diseases and vision. Several research teams from the Pierre and Marie Curie University, the INSERM and the CNRS are based there, as well as a Clinical Investigation Center fully dedicated to ophthalmology. The Institute is housed and managed by the UPMC which holds a global delegation for management from the CNRS and INSERM. The UPMC negotiates, manages and follows all the research contracts of the Vision Institute.

### **About the University Pierre and Marie Curie (UPMC)**

The UPMC, together with the University Panthéon-Assas (Paris 2) and the Paris Sorbonne university (Paris 4), is a founding member of the Foundation of Scientific Partnership “Sorbonne Universités”. First French university in the Shanghai ranking, the UPMC, the main heir of the Faculty of Science of Sorbonne, is the largest French scientist and medical university. All major scientific and medical disciplines are taught on the various sites of the university: chemistry, electronics, computing, mathematics, mechanics, physics, geology and the environment, life sciences and medicine. Budget: global consolidated budget of 400 million euros. Staff: university community of 10,800 staff of which 5,900 teachers-researchers and researchers. Students: 31,000 students including 6,300 foreigners. Research: 125 laboratories, 19 doctoral schools, 6,700 publications a year, that is 10 % of the French production, 3,400 PhD students and 745 theses supported per year. For more information please visit: <http://www.upmc.fr/>

### **About Fovea Pharmaceuticals, the Ophthalmology Division of sanofi-aventis**

Sanofi-aventis ambition is to become a leader in ophthalmology and to be different through innovative solutions and a patient-centered approach. Fovea Pharmaceuticals, the Group’s Ophthalmology Division, has four products in Phase I and II of development. The three products in Phase II (FOV1101, FOV2302 and FOV2304) aim at treating persistent allergic form of conjunctivitis, Acute Macular Edema following retinal vein occlusion and Chronic Macular Edema due to diabetic retinopathy. The fourth product, RetinoStat<sup>®</sup>, from sanofi-aventis partnership with Oxford BioMedica, is currently in Phase I for the treatment of AMD. Created in May 2005, Fovea Pharmaceuticals is a wholly-owned subsidiary of sanofi-aventis Group since 2009, which is based in Paris on the premises of the Vision Institute. For more information, please visit: [www.fovea-pharma.com](http://www.fovea-pharma.com).

### **About sanofi-aventis**

Sanofi-aventis, a leading global pharmaceutical company, discovers, develops and distributes therapeutic solutions to improve the lives of everyone. Sanofi-aventis is listed in Paris (EURONEXT: SAN) and in New York (NYSE: SNY). For more information, please visit [www.sanofi-aventis.com](http://www.sanofi-aventis.com).

## **Forward-Looking Statements**

*This press release contains forward-looking statements as defined in the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, as amended. Forward-looking statements are statements that are not historical facts. These statements include projections and estimates and their underlying assumptions, statements regarding plans, objectives, intentions and expectations with respect to future financial results, events, operations, services, product development and potential, and statements regarding future performance. Forward-looking statements are generally identified by the words “expects,” “anticipates,” “believes,” “intends,” “estimates,” “plans” and similar expressions. Although sanofi-aventis’ management believes that the expectations reflected in such forward-looking statements are reasonable, investors are cautioned that forward-looking information and statements are subject to various risks and uncertainties, many of which are difficult to predict and generally beyond the control of sanofi-aventis, that could cause actual results and developments to differ materially from those expressed in, or implied or projected by, the forward-looking information and statements. These risks and uncertainties include among other things, the uncertainties inherent in research and development, future clinical data and analysis, including post marketing, decisions by regulatory authorities, such as the FDA or the EMA, regarding whether and when to approve any drug, device or biological application that may be filed for any such product candidates as well as their decisions regarding labelling and other matters that could affect the availability or commercial potential of such products candidates, the absence of guarantee that the products candidates if approved will be commercially successful, the future approval and commercial success of therapeutic alternatives, the Group’s ability to benefit from external growth opportunities as well as those discussed or identified in the public filings with the SEC and the AMF made by sanofi-aventis, including those listed under “Risk Factors” and “Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Statements” in sanofi-aventis’ annual report on Form 20-F for the year ended December 31, 2010. Other than as required by applicable law, sanofi-aventis does not undertake any obligation to update or revise any forward-looking information or statements.*

## **References**

<sup>1</sup>WHO website: <http://www.who.int/en/>

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