

## **First Patient Entered onto Ascenta Therapeutics' Phase I Trial of its Lead Product, AT-101, a Pan-inhibitor of the Bcl-2 Protein Family**

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Ascenta Therapeutics, Inc., a developer of new medicines to treat cancer, announced today that the first patient has been treated on its Phase I trial in Solid Tumors. The company is partnering with medical oncologists at the University of Alabama, the Mayo Clinic and Georgia Cancer Specialists, who will enter patients onto this trial. An investigational new drug (IND) application had been filed with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for AT-101 for the treatment of cancer in December 2004 and was approved earlier this month. AT-101 is an orally bioavailable small molecule inhibitor of the Bcl-2 family of proteins. These proteins are often expressed on tumor cells, metastases, and other cells with chromosomal damage. Extensive preclinical research with AT-101 indicates it acts through endogenous pathways to selectively induce apoptosis in tumor cells bearing one or more Bcl-2 family proteins. "This first step into clinical development represents a very significant step forward for Ascenta's product portfolio," said Dr. Jon T. Holmlund, Ascenta's Chief Medical Officer and Vice-President of Development, commenting on the successful start to Phase I. "We are looking forward to implementing an extensive clinical plan for AT-101 in a number of different cancer indications following completion of this phase I trial." AT-101 is a derivative of a compound naturally found in cotton seeds. Ascenta has licensed the use of this compound for the treatment of cancer from the National Institutes of Health. Ascenta has also licensed other compounds that act through apoptotic mechanisms from the University of Michigan.

*Founded in 2003, Ascenta is a privately-held biopharmaceutical company that discovers and develops targeted new medicines for the treatment of cancer, and is headquartered in San Diego, CA. Ascenta's technology is focused on discovering molecules that hit vulnerable targets in endogenous apoptosis pathways and shut down cell growth and proliferation in cancer cells. Ascenta's broad pipeline of compounds is licensed from both the National Institutes of Health and the laboratory of Dr. Shaomeng Wang at the University of Michigan.*