

## **Phase II Program of Ascenta's Lead Product, AT-101, a Pan-inhibitor of the Bcl-2 Protein Family, Begins**

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Ascenta Therapeutics, Inc., a developer of new medicines to treat cancer, is sponsoring a Phase II clinical trial of its lead product, AT-101, in patients with Non-hodgkin's lymphoma. AT-101 is a small molecule inhibitor of the Bcl-2 family of proteins. Preclinical research indicates that AT-101 acts through endogenous pathways to selectively induce apoptosis in tumor cells bearing one or more of the proteins in the Bcl-2 family: Bcl-2, Bcl-X<sub>L</sub>, Bcl-w, or Mcl-1. These proteins are often over-expressed on tumor cells, metastases, and other cells with chromosomal damage. In addition to this selectivity relative to conventional chemotherapeutic agents, AT-101 is an oral drug, whereas most anticancer agents require intravenous administration. "Ascenta's focus on cancer clinical development has enabled us to move into Phase 2 trials within nine months of initiating our clinical program for AT-101," said Dr. Jon T. Holmlund, Ascenta's Chief Medical Officer and Vice-President of Development, commenting on the progress. "We will shortly begin trials in other cancer indications." AT-101 is a derivative of a compound naturally found in cotton seeds. Ascenta has licensed extensive intellectual property around AT-101 and from both the National Institutes of Health and 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. The company has offices in San Diego, California and a preclinical research facility in Shanghai, China. Its 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.*