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## **CRT PIONEER FUND, CANCER RESEARCH UK AND NCI COLLABORATE TO BOOST RESEARCH AGAINST THE 'UNDRUGGABLE' RAS**

Cancer Research UK and the Cancer Research Technology Pioneer Fund (CPF)\* have committed £2.5 million in collaboration with the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in the US to tackle one of the toughest challenges in cancer that has thwarted researchers for more than 30 years.

Scientists will develop and test promising new molecules for targeting RAS, one of the most common driving mutations in aggressive, hard to treat cancers including pancreatic and lung cancer.

Scientists at the NCI in Frederick, Maryland, USA will work with the Drug Discovery Unit at the Cancer Research UK Beatson Institute\*\* in Glasgow, Scotland to develop gold standard tests to analyse these novel RAS inhibitors.

This new collaboration links up with the NCI's RAS Initiative\*\*\* which brings scientists together from around the globe to help develop drugs targeting the faulty protein. Launched in 2013, the initiative has established a hub of expertise that supports the international community in developments that could have huge clinical benefit.

The CRT Pioneer Fund, managed by Sixth Element Capital, will be responsible for the commercial exploitation of compounds that arise from the collaboration.

For decades, scientists have been attempting to target RAS,\*\*\*\* but with little success. This is because RAS lacks an obvious site on its surface for potential drug molecules to fit into and inhibit its signalling.

Dr Martin Drysdale, head of the Drug Discovery Unit at the Cancer Research UK Beatson Institute, said: "Our team is determined to challenge the dogma that RAS is 'undruggable.' This collaboration is our biggest yet and will double our resource targeting RAS. We are excited to be joining forces with the NCI in their pioneering RAS Initiative."

"Instead of scientists working and thinking in isolation, the NCI has created a research hub to pull together all the best science and expertise. My team is looking forward to contributing and working with Dr Frank McCormick, who leads the RAS Initiative and who has been at the forefront of cancer science for many years."

Dr Frank McCormick, who directs the research efforts of the RAS Initiative at the Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research, sponsored by the NCI, said: "We're making progress in our understanding of how RAS proteins function at the molecular level and how they form signalling complexes in membranes. New technologies and tools mean we can

now analyse these proteins in ways that were not possible a few years ago, and can now test new ways of blocking RAS function.”

Dr Iain Foulkes, chief executive officer of Cancer Research Technology and executive director of research and innovation at Cancer Research UK, said: “It’s crucial that we unite the brightest minds across the globe. This international collaboration and investment could herald a new era in targeting RAS.

“We hope to develop these small molecules to pave the way for potential drugs in the future. Our aim is to work alongside industry to ensure any progress makes its way into clinical trials.”

Dr Robert James, Managing Partner at Sixth Element Capital, said: “The CRT Pioneer Fund was established to invest in outstanding science that has the potential to benefit patients on a global scale. We are delighted to have catalysed this relationship which has created an opportunity to make real progress in discovering drugs against RAS, one of the most important oncogenes in cancer.”

#### **ENDS**

For media enquiries contact Stephanie McClellan in the Cancer Research Technology press office on 020 3469 5314 or, out of hours, on 07050 264 059.

#### **Notes to editor:**

\* Funding from the Cancer Research Technology Pioneer Fund (CPF), originally created as a joint initiative between CRT and the European Investment Fund (EIF):

<http://www.cancertechnology.co.uk/funding>

\*\* <http://www.beatson.gla.ac.uk/Drug-Discovery/drug-discovery.html>

\*\*\* <https://www.cancer.gov/research/key-initiatives/ras>

\*\*\*\* At the cell membrane the RAS protein acts as a switch to send signals which tell the cell to grow and divide. Faulty versions of this protein cannot be switched off and causes too many of these signals to be produced – leading to cancer.

#### **About Sixth Element Capital and CRT Pioneer Fund**

Sixth Element Capital is a fund manager, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The partnership is managed by Dr Robert James and Ian Miscampbell, each of whom is highly experienced in the financing and commercialisation of research and development projects. Further information can be found on their web site [www.sixthelementcapital.com](http://www.sixthelementcapital.com).

The first fund managed by Sixth Element Capital is the CRT Pioneer Fund, a £70m Fund dedicated to investment in oncology development programmes in Europe. The sweet spot for investment is pre-lead optimisation through to early clinical trials in man. The Fund is dedicated to financing the best assets and companies emanating from Europe and expects to commit two-thirds of its investment to projects derived from Cancer Research UKs oncology drug discovery portfolio with the remainder being invested in projects from outside Cancer Research UK. [www.sixthelementcapital.com](http://www.sixthelementcapital.com)

## **About Cancer Research Technology**

Cancer Research Technology (CRT) is a specialist commercialisation and development company, which aims to develop new discoveries in cancer research for the benefit of cancer patients. CRT works closely with leading international cancer scientists and their institutes to protect intellectual property arising from their research and to establish links with commercial partners. CRT facilitates the discovery, development and marketing of new cancer therapeutics, vaccines, diagnostics and enabling technologies. CRT is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cancer Research UK, the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. Further information about CRT can be found at [www.cancertechnology.com](http://www.cancertechnology.com) and here: <http://www.cancertechnology.co.uk/how-we-are-advancing-discoveries-beat-cancer>

## **About Cancer Research UK**

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research.
- Cancer Research UK's pioneering work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives.
- Cancer Research UK receives no government funding for its life-saving research. Every step it makes towards beating cancer relies on every pound donated.
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival in the UK double in the last forty years.
- Today, 2 in 4 people survive their cancer for at least 10 years. Cancer Research UK's ambition is to accelerate progress so that by 2034, 3 in 4 people will survive their cancer for at least 10 years.
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.
- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured.

*For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call [0300 123 1022](tel:03001231022) or visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).*