



FOUNDED BY BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL  
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## **Partners invests in startup company to develop new treatments for cardiovascular disease and diabetic ulcers**

### ***Provasculon, Inc., based in Biogen Idec Innovation Incubator***

**March 21, 2008 – BOSTON, MA** – Partners HealthCare today announced a \$500,000 investment in Provasculon, Inc., a startup company now part of the Biogen Idec Innovation Incubator (bi3), that will develop novel protein therapeutics discovered at Brigham and Women's Hospital into treatments for cardiovascular disease and diabetic ulcers. The Partners investment is alongside significant investments made by Biogen Idec in the company.

The Partners funding is being provided through the Partners Innovation Fund, established in 2007 by Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital to address an unmet need for funding of early-stage technology and research and to bring promising new treatments to patients more quickly. Structured as a separate entity, the Fund uses an "evergreen" approach to investing, with all gains from investments recycling back into the Fund to create capital for additional investments.

The focus of the new company is to move research on novel forms of the protein Stromal Cell-Derived Factor-1 (SDF-1) towards clinical development. "Provasculon will support the development of an important technology to improve patient care for cardiovascular disease and diabetic ulcers. While approval for its use in patients is still a few years away, the formation of this company demonstrates a commitment by Biogen Idec and Partners HealthCare to translate science into treatments that improve patient care," said Anthony Sandrasagra, Chief Scientific Officer of Provasculon.

Provasculon licensed the novel forms of protein from Brigham and Women's Hospital, where they were developed by Richard Lee, MD, and Vincent Segers, MD, of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine. Research published in the journal *Circulation* in September, 2007, showed that in rats these novel proteins were able to promote the recruitment of stem cells to damaged tissue and improve cardiac function after a heart attack. "As a practicing cardiologist, I am keenly aware of the limitations of

existing therapies for many of our patients,” said Dr. Lee. “The focus of our research is patient-driven – these developments will help patients facing the serious consequences of cardiovascular disease.”

This is the second company to be funded by Biogen Idec and located in its bi3 facility, adjacent to its headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The partnership with bi3 gives the company access to capital and facilities and to scientists with world-class expertise in drug development. “This is a complex project, and we are excited about collaborating with Partners and Brigham and Women’s Hospital to bring these therapies into medical practice to improve patient care,” said Rainer Fuchs, PhD, Vice President of Biogen Idec and Executive Director of bi3. “The incubator initiative is a unique way for Biogen Idec to be a part of exciting scientific discoveries that complement our internal R&D efforts and potentially add product candidates to our pipeline.”

SDF-1 has long been known to have an important role in harnessing stem cells to assist in the process of tissue repair and revascularization. Its therapeutic use has been limited by the fact that it is inactivated by certain enzymes that are present in damaged tissue. Drs. Lee and Segers have developed new forms of the protein that resist inactivation. In rats, these forms have been shown to dramatically improve the potency of SDF-1 as a treatment for tissue damage after heart attack.

The technology will be investigated for use in other disease areas where tissue damage and reduced blood flow are present and SDF-1 has been shown to have a therapeutic benefit, including peripheral vascular disease and diabetic foot ulcers. There are currently more than 20 million patients with diabetes in the United States, and approximately 15% of these patients will be hospitalized with diabetes-related foot problems at some point in their lives. Complications from diabetic ulcers are responsible for approximately half the 50,000 amputations performed in the U.S. each year. More than \$11 billion per year is spent in the U.S. on treatment of diabetic foot ulcers.

**Partners HealthCare** is an integrated health system founded by Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital. In addition to its two academic medical centers, the Partners system also includes community and specialty hospitals, community health centers, a physician network, home health and long-term care services, and other health-related entities. Partners is one of the nation’s leading biomedical research organizations and a principal teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School. Partners HealthCare is a non-profit organization. For more information, visit [www.partners.org](http://www.partners.org).

The **Partners Innovation Fund** was established in 2007 with a total commitment of \$35 million from Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital. It addresses an unmet need for funding of early-stage technology and research which is expected to lead to improved medical care for patients. The Fund uses all gains to fund new investments. Its managing staff has more than 50 years of combined experience in early-stage venture capital, start-up management, and technology development.

**Biogen Idec**

Biogen Idec creates new standards of care in therapeutic areas with high unmet medical needs. Founded in 1978, Biogen Idec is a global leader in the discovery, development, manufacturing, and commercialization of innovative therapies. Patients in more than 90 countries benefit from Biogen Idec's significant products that address diseases such as lymphoma, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis. For product labeling, press releases and additional information about the company, please visit [www.biogenidec.com](http://www.biogenidec.com).

**Biogen Idec Innovation Incubator (bi3)**

Bi3 offers the opportunity for entrepreneurial scientists to rapidly convert novel biological insights into life-saving and life-changing therapeutics. Bi3's unique model blends the best of a startup's energy, a venture firm's capital and a fully-integrated biotech's resources to maximize the chances of scientific, clinical and financial success. For additional information about the Biogen Idec Innovation Incubator, please visit [www.biogenidec.com/bi3](http://www.biogenidec.com/bi3).

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