

# Affinia Therapeutics Raises \$60M in Series A Financing to Advance Rational Design AAV Platform and Transformative Gene Therapies

- *Lead Venture Investors Include Atlas Venture, F-Prime Capital and NEA*
- *Industry Veterans Sean Nolan and Rick Modi Join Forces with Renowned Scientific Co-founders Luk Vandenberghe, Botond Roska and Aaron Tward*
- *Company Focused on Devastating Genetic Muscle and Central Nervous System Diseases*

WALTHAM, Mass., March 31, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Affinia Therapeutics, an innovative gene therapy company with a platform for rationally designed adeno-associated virus (AAV) vectors and gene therapies and a mission to develop transformative medicines for devastating diseases, today announced it has closed an oversubscribed \$60 million Series A financing. Seed venture investors F-Prime Capital and New Enterprise Associates (NEA) co-lead the round alongside new investor Atlas Venture, with participation from seed investors Alexandria Venture Investments, Lonza and Partners Innovation Fund.

The proceeds will be used to advance the company's platform and develop transformative gene therapies for people affected by muscle and central nervous system (CNS) diseases with significant unmet need.

The company is led by recently appointed Chief Executive Officer Rick Modi, who has a proven track record of building value at companies including AveXis, InterMune, MedImmune and Centocor. Joining the board of directors as part of the financing are Dave Grayzel, M.D., Partner, Atlas Venture; Ed Mathers, General Partner, NEA; and Robert Weisskoff, Ph.D., Partner, F-Prime Capital. Industry veteran and gene therapy leader Sean Nolan will chair the board.

"At Affinia Therapeutics, we're setting a new standard in gene therapies by leveraging our proprietary platform to methodically engineer novel AAV vectors and gene therapies that have remarkable targeting properties," said Modi, CEO of Affinia. "We are pleased to partner with such a distinguished syndicate to advance our platform and investigational product candidates toward the clinic for patients in need."

The company's technology was licensed from Lonza and Massachusetts Eye and Ear. It was developed at the Grousbeck Gene Therapy Center and further advanced under a sponsored research agreement with Lonza led by Luk Vandenberghe, Ph.D., Associate Professor at Mass. Eye and Ear and Harvard Medical School and a co-inventor of AAV9.

In addition to Vandenberghe, joining Affinia Therapeutics as scientific co-founders are Botond Roska, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology Basel; Aaron Tward, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California, San Francisco; and Eric Zinn, Ph.D. student, Mass. Eye and Ear and Harvard University. Together, these scientists have authored more than 200 papers and filed more than 20 patents in the field of gene therapy.

“Affinia Therapeutics is bringing together complementary expertise allowing us to realize a rational design future for AAV vectors, promoters and other components of gene therapies. By leveraging synthetic and systems biology combined with high-throughput screening and tissue and single-cell resolution, we are aspiring to achieve much-needed improved pharmacological control of this novel modality in medicine,” said Vandenberghe, Director, Grousbeck Gene Therapy Center at Mass. Eye and Ear.

The Series A financing comes after Vandenberghe and his team successfully developed AAVSmartLibraries comprising thousands of functional novel AAV vectors. Each vector is uniquely identified, and the libraries can be screened across species for parameters of high interest, including tissue tropism, manufacturing yield and pre-existing immunity. Observations arising from each library screen provide insights into the vector’s structure-function, enabling the rational design of novel vectors and gene therapies with remarkably improved properties. Affinia Therapeutics has potentially the world’s largest library of patented functional AAV vectors.

“Affinia Therapeutics’ methodical process for designing and evaluating vectors is a differentiated approach to gene therapy, and the highly experienced leadership team will help carry these discoveries to the development, manufacturing and commercialization of transformative medicines,” said Mathers, General Partner at NEA. “We are pleased to accelerate the impact of this exciting field.”

### **About Affinia Therapeutics**

At Affinia Therapeutics, our purpose is to develop gene therapies that can have a transformative impact on people affected by devastating genetic diseases. Our proprietary platform enables us to methodically engineer novel AAV vectors and gene therapies that have remarkable tissue targeting and other properties. We are building world-class capabilities to discover, develop, manufacture and commercialize gene therapy products with an initial focus on muscle and central nervous system (CNS) diseases with significant unmet need. [www.affiniatx.com](http://www.affiniatx.com).

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