Allon’s Founding Scientist Illana Gozes awarded Olson Prize from Peptides journal

15.11.2010 - Allon Therapeutics Inc. announced that Professor Illana Gozes, Allon’s founding scientist and the discoverer of Allon’s clinical-stage neuroprotective drug candidate davunetide, has been awarded the Olson Prize for her research insights into the behavioral effects of peptides by the journal Peptides. Awarded annually for the most meritorious original research article on the behavioral effects of peptides published during the previous year, the Olson Prize honors the outstanding contributions of Drs. Gayle A. and Richard D. Olson to the field of peptide research.

Prof. Gozes’ article, entitled “NAP (davunetide) enhances cognitive behavior in the STOP heterozygous mouse — A microtubule-deficient model of schizophrenia”, was published in Peptides in April 2010, and involved studies in mice that are bred to be deficient in a protein called stable tubule-only polypeptide (STOP) protein.

Associated with proper function of microtubular network, the STOP protein is important for the survival of the nerve cell. The deficient mice are a reliable model for schizophrenia and, in Prof. Gozes’ study, the mice showed schizophrenia-like symptoms (hyperactivity) that were ameliorated by chronic treatment with the antipsychotic drug, clozapine.

Prof. Gozes’ study showed that daily intranasal treatment with NAP (davunetide) significantly decreased hyperactivity and also protected the visual memory of the STOP-deficient mice. This result is consistent with previous research by Prof. Gozes in mouse models where brain pathology is characterized by the hyperphosphorylation of the microtubule-associated protein tau, often referred to as tauopathies.

Prof. Gozes’ research has shown that davunetide increases the ratio of non-phosphorylated tau to phosphorylated tau, resulting in the maintenance of the essential microtubular network. These results, and Allon’s clinical development program, suggest that davunetide is the most advanced tau-targeting drug candidate in clinical development.

Allon expects to have started the progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) study before the end of this quarter. PSP is a type of frontotemporal dementia (FTD) where there are extensive tauopathies. FTD is a group of rapidly progressive and fatal degenerative brain diseases, often misdiagnosed as Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease. The Company has previously demonstrated human efficacy in amnestic mild cognitive impairment, a precursor to Alzheimer’s disease, and cognitive impairment associated with schizophrenia.