

NIH STTR Grant to Fast Track New Class of Pain Reliever Without Addiction or Toxicity



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The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded a \$1.9 million Fast-Track Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant to South Rampart Pharma. The New Orleans life science company is developing a new class of non-opioid medicines to relieve pain and reduce fever discovered at and licensed from LSU

Health New Orleans, its formal collaborating research institution.

The grant will fund late-stage, pre-clinical development of the new analgesic/antipyretic and will also support continued collaboration with LSU Health New Orleans Neuroscience Center of Excellence on pain mechanisms. A [paper](#) describing the patented new drug was recently published in the *European Journal of Medicinal Chemistry*.

“The safe treatment of acute and chronic pain is one of the most prevalent and costly public health issues worldwide,” said Hernan Bazan, MD, DFSVS, FACS, CEO and co-founder of South Rampart Pharma, and Professor of Surgery at the Ochsner Clinic, who is the Principal Investigator of the grant. “Current medications are either highly addictive or cause harm to the liver or kidney with overuse.”

“This startup company represents the clinical translational application of LSU Health New Orleans’ discoveries, and this grant funding will help us advance the development of one of our lead drugs that as a non-narcotic, has no abuse potential, and lacks the liver and kidney toxicity associated with over-the-counter analgesics,” said Nicolas Bazan, MD, PhD, scientific co-founder of South Rampart Pharma, and Director of LSU Health New Orleans Neuroscience Center of Excellence.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the burden of pain in the United States is astounding. More than 100 million Americans have pain that persists for weeks to years. The financial toll of this epidemic costs \$560 billion to \$635 billion per year. Pain is ultimately a challenge for family, friends, and health care providers who must give support to the individual suffering from the physical as well as the emotional consequences of pain.

The NIH says the Small Business Innovation and Research (SBIR) and STTR programs are an integral source of capital for early-stage U.S. small businesses that are creating innovative technologies to improve health. These programs help small businesses break into the federal research and development (R&D) arena, create lifesaving technologies, and stimulate economic growth. The NIH STTR program is similar to the NIH SBIR program but requires that the small business formally collaborates with a research institution in Phase I and Phase II. The NIH Fast-Track application process expedites award decisions and funding of SBIR and STTR Phase II applications for scientifically meritorious projects that have a high potential for commercialization. In 2019, there were only 19 Competing NIH STTR fast-track Commercialization grants awarded in the U.S. In the past decade, there have been no grants of this type awarded to institutions in the state of Louisiana.

Dr. Robert Naismith, co-founder of the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, who has founded several life science companies, said, “The discovery by South Rampart Pharma of a potentially safer new chemical entity for the treatment of pain has the potential to be a major clinical advance. The underlying science clearly speaks to a unique mechanism of action, which is recognized by the critical support of the NIH and the NINDS fast-track designation.”

“Both acute and chronic pain affects hundreds of millions of people around the world. Current pain medications often have side-effects that may be serious, especially in elderly individuals affected by chronic illnesses. The development of new safe analgesics is mandatory in particular for these patients. I am excited to learn of the development of a new class of non-opioid drugs developed by SRP, which has recently won NIH support,” said Prof. Pierluigi Nicotera, MD, PhD, and Founding Director of the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE) in Bonn, Germany.

“Pain is a serious problem for many people in the world and the possibility for a novel, safe, effective and non-addictive treatment is of high importance,” said Dr. Marianne Schultzberg, Professor of Neurobiology at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden.

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans (LSU Health New Orleans) educates Louisiana's health care professionals. The state's health sciences university leader, LSU Health New Orleans includes a School of Medicine with branch campuses in Baton Rouge and Lafayette, the state's only School of Dentistry, Louisiana's only public School of Public Health, and Schools of Allied Health Professions, Nursing, and Graduate Studies. LSU Health New Orleans faculty take care of patients in public and private hospitals and clinics throughout the region. In the vanguard of biosciences research, the LSU Health New Orleans research enterprise generates jobs and enormous annual economic impact. LSU Health New Orleans faculty have made lifesaving discoveries and continue to work to prevent, advance treatment or cure disease. To learn more, visit <http://www.lsuhs.edu>, <http://www.twitter.com/LSUHealthNO>, or <http://www.facebook.com/LSUHSC>.

South Rampart Pharma is committed to improving the lives of people suffering from acute, chronic, or neuropathic pain by a new non-opioid pain medication. SRP's proprietary compounds are effective in reducing both pain and fever in pre-clinical studies without liver and kidney toxicity that are associated with current common over the counter analgesics. SRP is

working with top medicinal chemists across the United States and in Spain at clinical and academic research centers to develop oral and intravenous formulations
(<http://southrampartpharma.com>).