



Press Release

THERAtRAME SA, a new spin-off of the University of Liège and WELBIO, secures €4.5M seed financing to develop novel cancer medicines in the field of tRNA epitranscriptomics.

Liège, Belgium, 05 September 2022 – THERAtRAME SA has closed its first financing round of €4.5M to support the discovery and development of novel tRNA epitranscriptomics based cancer drugs through its AI-driven drug discovery platform. This financial round includes €2.5M of equity from the interuniversity fund QBIC3, the public institutional funds NOSHAQ and S.R.I.W., the University of Liège through its technology transfer and investment company, Gesval SA, alongside a group of angel investors. A subsidy of €2.0M from the Walloon Region completes this financing round.

A unique and new approach to expand the cancer target space

THERAtRAME, incubated at the Belgian start-up accelerator VentureLab since 2020, was founded based on new insights in tRNA epitranscriptomics resulting from over a decade of fundamental research in the laboratories of Professors Dr. Alain Chariot, Dr. Francesca Rapino and Dr. Pierre Close at the GIGA Institute (ULiège) and WELBIO. Their work has revealed that cancer cells seize control of the protein synthesis process by making specific modifications in the tRNA, an essential component of the protein translation machinery, to support the cells' rapid growth, metastasis and resistance against existing drugs. This new discovery exposes previously underexplored vulnerabilities in cancer that are now being targeted by THERAtRAME's drug discovery platform to develop first-in-class small molecule therapeutics to address the high unmet medical needs in cancer treatment. In addition, THERAtRAME leverages its proprietary artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to discover new unpredicted key players in cancer development and to identify the most promising oncology indications for clinical studies.

The founders, Dr. Pierre Close and Dr. Francesca Rapino, are both WELBIO Principal Investigators at the GIGA Biomedical Research Institute (ULiège), Foundation against Cancer laureates and, respectively, FNRS Senior research associate and FNRS Research associate. **Pierre Close** is the principal investigator of the Laboratory of Cancer Signaling. The work of his laboratory focuses on elucidating the mechanisms underlying cancer development through changes in proteome expression and mRNA translation via tRNA regulation. **Francesca Rapino**, as head of the Laboratory of Cancer Stemness, investigates the role of tRNA in cancer stem cells and cellular differentiation and is awardee of the competitive European Research Council (ERC) starting grant. Pierre Close and Francesca Rapino will join THERAtRAME as Chief Scientific Officer and Chief Operating Officer, respectively.

THERAtRAME also announces the appointment of Dr. **Marc Zabeau** as its independent Chairman of the board of directors and Mr. Ching Man Choi as Chief Executive Officer. **Marc Zabeau** is a seasoned biotech investor and entrepreneur with more than 30 years of experience in biotech venture creations. He has founded several biotech companies including Helix, KeyGene, GenScope and Methexis. **Ching Man Choi** brings 15 years of experience in biotech financing, corporate development and biomedical research. Prior to joining THERAtRAME, Mr. Choi held Investor Relations and Business Development positions at the Euronext listed cell therapy specialist, Bone Therapeutics.

"It is truly exciting to translate our fundamental discoveries in the field of tRNA epitranscriptomics into clinical applications that we hope will provide new therapeutic possibilities for cancer patients." – **Pierre Close and Francesca Rapino, co-founders of THERAtRAME**

"We are delighted to see THERAtRAME and the founders' cancer research laboratories pursue their ambition to bring novel therapeutic solutions in the field of cancer, thereby bridging fundamental strategic research to innovation" – **Vinciane Gaussin, Managing Director WELBIO A.S.B.L.**

"The creation of THERAtRAME is based on innovative research carried out at the GIGA Institute of ULiège which uncovers the until recently little known yet fundamental role of the epitranscriptome of tRNA during



the steps of gene expression by mRNA. This offers a window of opportunity to better understand how cancers develop, and therefore to identify chemical processes that are targets for innovative cancer treatments.” – Pr. Fabrice Bureau, immunologist, Vice-rector for Research at ULiège

“Despite significant advances in the field, cancer continues to be one of the most devastating diseases we have yet to tackle. THERAtRAME aims to contribute to this mission, and combines highly-innovative science from the renowned GIGA institute with a complementary and experienced team. Qbic III is excited to help launch this remarkable spin-off from our partner ULiège, which underscores our fund's goal to support the transformation of scientific breakthroughs from our partner institutes into sustainable companies. We are looking forward to continuing to play an important role in providing THERAtRAME with the support they need to achieve their ambitious goals.” – Sara Vandewijngaert, Investment Manager at QBIC3

“THERAtRAME is an excellent example of the impact that NOSHAQ can create by fostering local talent and leadership, to address major unmet needs in healthcare. NOSHAQ is proud to support THERAtRAME in leveraging its core strengths and advance the development of innovative RNA-based therapies.” – Eric Brandt, Investment Manager at Noshaq

“We are thrilled to join this exciting adventure and support a pioneering company like THERATRAME with its revolutionary approach tackling cancer. Oncology is an area in desperate need of innovation and it is great to see THERATRAME joining other innovative players in the Walloon Region. At SRIW Life Sciences, we are committed to helping our local heroes achieve their fascinating yet challenging journey” – Christina Franssen, Investment Manager at SRIW Life Sciences

About THERAtRAME SA

THERAtRAME is a new biotech spin-off of University of Liège which aims to revolutionize drug discovery by exploring new target areas to develop innovative cancer therapies. Its pioneering approach exploits the new target space of tRNA epitranscriptomics. Powered by a proprietary AI-driven drug discovery platform, THERAtRAME is developing novel first-in-class drug candidates to create better treatments for cancer patients.

About GIGA-Institute, ULiège

The GIGA Institute is University of Liège's interdisciplinary research center in biomedical sciences. It advances cutting-edge academic research with the aim to improve research and have a real impact on human health. The GIGA Institute is composed of 9 thematic units of research revolving around 4 main axes: cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diseases related to Immunity, Inflammation and Infection, and neuroscience. Located within the University Hospital on the Sart-Tilman campus, the GIGA Institute counts more than 600 scientists focusing on the development of health solutions for the benefit of the patients.

The University of Liège (ULiège) is one of Belgium's leading universities (27,000 students, 3.500 teachers and researchers). ULiège develops and promotes excellence in research, multidisciplinary and direct engagement with its instruction. ULiège is also a key research and economic player in Wallonia. Committed to its region, this technological leader stimulates innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. To date, the University of Liège, through its Research & innovation service and Gesval SA, its knowledge transfer & investment company, is at the origin of more than 150 spin-off companies and manages more than 190 intellectual property procedures and 430 active licenses and technology transfers.

About WELBIO (Walloon Excellence in Life Sciences & Biotechnology)

WELBIO is an inter-university life sciences research institute based in Wallonia, Belgium and funded by the Walloon region. WELBIO aims at promoting scientific excellence in strategic life sciences research and translating scientific achievements in medical, pharmaceutical and veterinary biotechnology applications.

About QBIC3

Qbic is a Belgian inter-university venture capital fund focusing on the transformation of technological breakthroughs into sustainable businesses. Qbic supports spin-offs and start-ups that valorize research from Qbic's knowledge partners in the deeptech, software, biotech, and medtech sectors. Qbic is one of the largest spin-off funds in Europe managing € 150 million in resources over the different funds. Qbic I launched in 2012 and has finalized its portfolio of 18 ventures; Qbic II launched in 2017 and has a portfolio of 19 ventures, and Qbic III launched in 2022 and is currently building its portfolio.

About NOSHAQ

Noshaq is a Belgian investment fund and project developer with a portfolio of 474 companies and €700 million assets under management. Noshaq is the reference financial partner for the creation and development of SMEs in the Liege Region. Over the years, Noshaq has developed a range of financing vehicles in line with the needs and trends of the market and its strategy. Each



service offered by Noshq is always determined according to the demands and needs of the owner-investor, creating a leverage effect on the company's development. www.noshaq.be

About S.R.I.W.

SRIW Life Sciences invests in "local heroes," scientists and entrepreneurs in life sciences who want to leverage their innovation to build a sustainable and equitable global economy with roots in Wallonia.

As a public investment fund, we focus on diversity and cross-fertilization in its broadest sense. We invest in life sciences companies at diverse stages of development across a wide range of technologies and disease areas.

We are an early and patient investor; we invest in the most promising early-stage companies and can act with a long-term view – longer than the average VCs.

The role of SRIW as a risk capital provider in the life sciences sector support empowering innovators to explore areas they might hesitate to venture into alone. And by supporting innovative start-ups, we aim to strengthen the economic health of our region.

More information: <http://www.sriw.be>.

Contact:

THERAFRAME SA

Ching Man Choi, Chief Executive Officer | +32 497 54.39.72

Francesca Rapino, PhD, co-founder & Chief Operating Officer | +32 498 97.56.21

Pierre Close, PhD, co-founder & Chief Scientific Officer | +32 479 49.92.90

info@theratrame.com | www.theratrame.com