Progress in Developing Alzheimer's Disease Treatments Featured at the 12th Annual Clinical Trials in Alzheimer's Disease (CTAD) Conference

The Clinical Trials on Alzheimer's Disease (CTAD) conference, held each year since 2008, has become a major venue for clinical trialists and other researchers from academia and industry to share learnings from recent clinical trials and learn about new therapeutics, diagnostics, and tools in development to accelerate trials. The 12th annual CTAD conference will be held from December 4-7 in San Diego, California and is open and free for credentialed members of the media.

Since its inception, a central goal of the conference has been to advance the development of effective treatments for Alzheimer's disease (AD) by applying lessons learned in ongoing clinical trials as well as completed trials, including those that failed to demonstrate efficacy or that were terminated for other reasons.

Organized and planned by AD clinical researchers, led by Jacques Touchon, MD, PhD of the University Hospital of Montpellier; Paul Aisen, MD, of the Alzheimer's Therapeutic Research Institute (ATRI) at the University of Southern California; Bruno Vellas, MD, PhD of the University Hospital of Toulouse, and Mike Weiner, MD, of the University of California, San Francisco, CTAD has grown and diversified over the years as AD clinical trials have become larger, longer, more costly, and more complex. Delegates now come from around the world to share data from studies conducted across the spectrum of development, ranging from early stage studies of novel therapeutics targeting a range of mechanisms, to results from later stage trials. Investigators share information on the mechanisms of treatments in development, clinical and biomarker results from studies, as well as experiences with participant recruitment, outcome measures, trial design, and data management and analysis.

Professor Vellas recalled that in 2008, he and Professor Touchon conceived of the conference as a way to focus the attention of key leaders in academia and industry on the urgent need for clinical trials that would lead to new AD therapeutics. The only drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration then and now were cholinesterase inhibitors and memantine, which offer only moderate symptomatic benefits but do not slow the progression of the disease.

"We had a vision that if academia and industry brainstormed together, new partnerships and collaborations would accelerate AD drug development," said Vellas. "Although we are still waiting for a disease-modifying treatment, we are optimistic that these treatments are on the horizon."

He noted that Biogen announced just recently that it plans to seek regulatory approval for aducanumab, one of a new class of therapeutics that uses antibodies to target and eliminate the protein beta-amyloid in the brain. Beta-amyloid accumulation in the brain has long been thought to trigger a pathological cascade that ultimately leads to dementia, but this will be the first time a treatment that eliminates beta-amyloid has been shown to have beneficial effects in some patients. On Thursday, December 5th at 8:00 am (PST), Biogen will present late-breaking results from its Phase 3 study of aducanumab. Updated information will also be presented from many other studies, including treatments for neuropsychiatric and behavioral symptoms that are among the most burdensome to patients and caregivers, and treatment approaches aimed at preventing dementia with exercise, diet, and other lifestyle interventions.