



Pliant Therapeutics Appoints Craig Blanchette, Ph.D., as Senior Vice President, Research (RNAi)

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Recognized leader in RNAi drug discovery with track record of advancing novel delivery platforms and therapeutics to drive Company's integrin-mediated delivery platform

Craig D. Blanchette, Ph.D.

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., Oct. 20, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Pliant Therapeutics, Inc. (Nasdaq: PLRX), a clinical-stage biotechnology company focused on the discovery and development of integrin-based therapeutics, today announced the appointment of Craig Blanchette, Ph.D., as Senior Vice President, Research (RNAi). Dr. Blanchette is an accomplished biopharmaceutical research and development executive with more than two decades of drug discovery and development expertise, including a deep proficiency in RNAi and oligonucleotide chemistry, as well as delivery.

"I am excited to welcome Craig to the team and to see his contributions in realizing the potential of our proprietary integrin-mediated delivery platform," said Bernard Coulie, M.D., Ph.D., President and Chief Executive Officer of Pliant. "Craig's experience in advancing novel delivery platforms and leading siRNA programs from discovery to clinical development will significantly augment Pliant's deep integrin chemistry and biology expertise."

Dr. Blanchette joins Pliant from Switch Therapeutics, most recently serving as Chief Scientific Officer. At Switch, Dr. Blanchette built a cross-functional RNAi discovery organization from inception, converted a proprietary platform into a three-program pipeline and advanced two programs through development-candidate nomination into IND-enabling studies. Prior to Switch, Dr. Blanchette held roles of increasing responsibility at Genentech, most recently serving as Head of Protein Chemistry where he led the oligonucleotide delivery strategy and drove strategic portfolio decisions across multiple therapeutic modalities. Prior to Genentech, Dr. Blanchette served as a staff scientist in the Biological Sciences Department at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories where he led a team to build multiple vaccine programs using novel nanoparticle technology. Dr. Blanchette received his B.S. in Biology and Physics from Vassar College and his Ph.D. in Biophysics from the University of California, Davis.

"I am thrilled to join Pliant at such a pivotal moment," said Dr. Blanchette. "The integrin-targeting small molecule discovery platform Pliant has built over the past decade holds immense promise for delivering RNAi to high-value tissues and realizing its full potential for patients with diseases of high unmet need."

About Pliant Therapeutics, Inc.

Pliant Therapeutics is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery and development of integrin-based therapeutics. Pliant's lead program is PLN-101095, a small molecule, dual-selective inhibitor of $\alpha v\beta 8$ and $\alpha v\beta 1$ integrins, that is being developed for the treatment of ICI-refractory advanced or metastatic solid tumors. PLN-101095 is being investigated in FORTIFY, a Phase 1b indication expansion trial enrolling patients with NSCLC, tumors with high tumor mutational burden or clear cell renal cell carcinoma. Pliant's preclinical research is focused on tissue-specific delivery and internalization of drug payloads utilizing integrin receptor-binding molecules with programs focused on delivering siRNAs to skeletal muscle cells, adipocytes, and renal cells. For additional information, please visit: www.PliantRx.com. Follow Pliant on social media at [X](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

Inducement Grant Under Nasdaq Listing Rule 5635(c)(4)

In connection with the commencement of Dr. Blanchette's employment with the Company, on October 19, 2026 (the "Grant Date"), the Company granted him non-statutory stock options to purchase an aggregate of 300,000 shares of Company common stock (the "Inducement Grant"). The Inducement Grant was granted under the Company's 2022 Inducement Plan (the "Plan") and is subject to the terms and conditions of the Plan. The Inducement Grant was granted as an inducement material to Dr. Blanchette entering into employment with the Company in accordance with Nasdaq Listing Rule 5635(c)(4). The Inducement Grant has an exercise price per share that is equal to the closing price of the Company's common stock on the Grant Date. The Inducement Grant will vest over a four-year period, with 25% of the shares vesting on the one-year anniversary of Dr. Blanchette's start date, and thereafter the remainder of the shares vest in 36 equal monthly installments, subject to Dr. Blanchette's continued employment with the Company through the applicable vesting dates.

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A photo accompanying this announcement is available at <https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/0dfc4eb8-78c5-4447->



Dr. Blanchette is a recognized leader in RNAi drug discovery and development was appointed Senior Vice President, Research (siRNA) of Pliant Therapeutics.

