



Pliant Therapeutics Appoints Leading Academic Researcher and Industry Veteran Rik Derynck, Ph.D. As Scientific Founder

January 5, 2017

Redwood City, Calif. – January 5, 2017 – Pliant Therapeutics, Inc., a company focused on discovering, developing and commercializing breakthrough treatments for fibrotic diseases, today appointed Rik Derynck, Ph.D. as a scientific founder of the company.

“Rik is a distinguished academic researcher whose pioneering work has vastly improved our understanding of TGF- β biology,” said Bernard Coulie, M.D., Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of Pliant Therapeutics. “He has been an active and influential scientific advisor since Pliant’s launch in February of 2016, and has provided critical guidance in the development of the company’s pipeline of innovative fibrosis therapies. We are thrilled to welcome Rik as a founder and will continue to leverage his expertise to translate advances in fibrosis biology into novel therapies for patients in need.”

Rik Derynck, Ph.D. is currently a Professor in the Departments of Cell and Tissue Biology, and Anatomy at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). He also serves as Co-Director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regeneration Medicine and Stem Cell Biology at UCSF. For the past twenty years, Dr. Derynck’s lab has been focusing on the characterization of TGF- β signaling mechanisms through activation of its receptors and the roles of the TGF- β -activated pathways in epithelial plasticity and epithelial-mesenchymal transition. His research has greatly impacted our understanding of TGF- β family, with many mechanistic and conceptual advances originating from his lab, and has helped to provide the basis for therapeutic approaches based on inhibition of TGF- β signaling. Among other awards, Dr. Derynck has been elected as Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

“It’s an honor to join the current members of the founding team of Pliant, a company that is committed to harnessing the therapeutic potential of integrin biology and TGF- β modulation to treat some of the most difficult fibrotic diseases,” said Rik Derynck, Ph.D. “I have spent much of my career elucidating the biological activities of TGF- β and the roles of TGF- β in human disease, and look forward to contributing my experience as the company continues to incorporate this science into its therapeutic pipeline.”

Dr. Derynck holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Ghent, Belgium, for the cDNA cloning and expression of fibroblast interferon (interferon- β), which provided the basis for the clinical development of this interferon by Biogen. Dr. Derynck initiated a program at Genentech in 1981 aimed at the molecular characterization of the newly discovered “transforming growth factor” activity. This program led to the cDNA cloning of TGF- α and TGF- β 1, the prototype of the TGF- β family of growth and differentiation factors. This research provided the basis of his research program aimed at characterizing the roles of TGF- β signaling in epithelial and mesenchymal differentiation, and the mechanisms of TGF- β signaling. It is also at the basis of the extensive research field of the biology of the TGF- β family in normal physiology and disease.

About Pliant Therapeutics

Pliant Therapeutics is an early-stage biotechnology company harnessing the therapeutic capabilities of integrin biology and TGF- β signaling to develop breakthrough treatments for fibrotic diseases. By leveraging its powerful product engine, Pliant’s mission is to prevent or even reverse fibrosis, restoring organ function. The company also aims to build a patient registry for certain areas of fibrotic disease to both increase understanding of natural disease progression and fuel biomarker discovery for efficient clinical trial design. Founded by a group of seasoned experts in fibrosis biology and medicinal chemistry, Pliant Therapeutics was launched in 2016 by Third Rock Ventures and is headquartered in Redwood City, California. For more information, please visit www.pliantrx.com.

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Media Contact:

Katie Engleman

Pure Communications

(910) 509-3977

Katie@purecommunications.com