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William Hodder joins Escient Pharmaceuticals as Chief Business Officer

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Industry veteran brings broad leadership expertise to guide growth strategy and business development for San Diego-based GPCR-focused biotech

Escient Pharmaceuticals, a biotechnology company advancing first-in-class G Protein Coupled Receptor (GPCR)-targeted drugs to address unmet needs for a broad range of therapeutic indications has announced that William Hodder has joined the company as Chief Business Officer. Hodder brings more than 30 years of broad biopharmaceutical industry experience including business development, corporate strategy, product marketing, sales, fundraising and product development. As a member of Escient's executive team, Mr. Hodder will report to the company's Chief Executive Officer Alain Baron, M.D.

“I am thrilled to welcome Bill to the growing Escient family,” said Dr. Baron. “We are urgently translating our proprietary insights about the biology and functions of the largely unexplored family of Mas-Related G-Protein Receptors, or Mrgprs, to discover novel therapies for serious, unserved medical needs across a broad range of therapeutic indications. As our pipeline continues to advance, Bill will be instrumental in leading all aspects of our planning and growth strategy.”

Launched in May 2018, Escient is focused on unleashing the therapeutic potential of specific orphan Mrgprs. Escient is initially pursuing therapies for neuro-immuno-inflammatory and autoreactive diseases. The company is using proceeds from its $40 million Series A financing, syndicated by The Column Group and 5AM Ventures and joined by Osage University Partners, to build out its team, advance its pipeline, and progress its initial preclinical programs to clinical study.

“I am very excited to join the Escient team, particularly at this early stage,” said Mr. Hodder. “What’s particularly thrilling about Escient is the ‘white space’-nature of the opportunity – a novel, yet unexplored family of GPCRs that, once harnessed, have the potential to unlock medical solutions for a broad spectrum of patients who today have no effective treatment options. I look forward to working closely with Alain and the team to create a solid business infrastructure to strategically support the promise of Escient’s science.”

Escient has made several other key hires since its launch, including Esther Martinborough, Ph.D., as Vice President of Chemistry; Richard Pittner, Ph.D., as Vice President of Biology, and Gregg Timony, MS, as Senior Director of DMPK-Toxicology.

“Ensuring we have the right team in place is critical to our near- and long-term success and our ability to deliver a pipeline of novel therapies for patients,” said Dr. Baron. “We are extremely fortunate to have recruited this top-notch talent, who are also just a wonderful group of dedicated, passionate, patient-focused people, over the past few months. We look forward to continuing to add to our team in the months ahead.”

Prior to joining Escient, Mr. Hodder was most recently a corporate and business development consultant, advising multiple private and public biotech companies on partnering and fundraising matters. Previously, he was Senior Vice President, Corporate Development at Protagonist Therapeutics (Nasdaq: PTGX), a clinical stage biotech company where he was responsible for all licensing and alliance management as well as certain fundraising and operations activities. At Protagonist, Mr. Hodder led, or played a significant role in, licensing and fundraising transactions that raised over $220 million including the licensing of a pre-clinical asset to Janssen Biotech for upfront and future milestone payments totaling $990 million. Prior to joining Protagonist, Mr. Hodder was a co-founder and CEO of Trenovus, Inc., a biotech company focused on developing novel inhibitors of heterotopic ossification present in several serious and rare conditions including Ankylosing Spondylitis and Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva. Mr. Hodder also previously served as Vice President of Business Development and Corporate Officer at FibroGen, Inc., where he was responsible for all licensing and M&A activity, raising over $500 million for the company. This included the out-licensing of HIF prolyl hydroxylase inhibitors for anemia indications to Astellas for the European, South Africa and Middle East territories. Prior to joining FibroGen, Mr. Hodder served as Director of Business Development and Marketing at Aradigm, a drug delivery company. He has also held sales, marketing, and product development positions at Penederm (acquired by Mylan Laboratories), Ciba Geigy (now Novartis), Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, and Marion Laboratories (now Sanofi).

Mr. Hodder received a B.S. in biology from Oakland University and an M.B.A. from The University of Chicago Booth School of Business.