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The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and GSK has announced the creation of a dedicated HIV Cure center and a jointly owned new company that will focus on discovering a cure for HIV/AIDS. This unique public-private partnership will redefine the traditional way of conducting research and create a new model to seek the breakthroughs needed to tackle an extraordinarily challenging global health issue.

The HIV Cure center will be located on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus and will focus exclusively on finding a cure for HIV/AIDS. The new company, Qura Therapeutics, will handle the business side of the partnership, including intellectual property, commercialization, manufacturing and governance. Together, the HIV Cure center and Qura Therapeutics will serve as a catalyst for additional partners and public funding that will likely be needed to eradicate HIV worldwide. The collaboration is also expected to recruit and attract top talent from around the world.

"The excitement of this public-private partnership lies in its vast potential. Carolina has been at the forefront of HIV/AIDS research for the last 30 years. This first of its kind, joint-ownership model is a novel approach toward finding a cure, and we hope it serves as an invitation to the world's best researchers and scientists. Today, Carolina's best are taking another major step in the global fight against HIV/AIDS," said UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Mr Carol L Folt.

"Like UNC, GSK has a long legacy of HIV research success. From the development of the world's first breakthrough medicine for HIV patients in the 1980s, to our leadership in the market today through ViiV Healthcare, we're continuously challenging ourselves to meet the needs of patients," GSK CEO Sir Andrew Witty said. He added, "This partnership is a testament to our past and present leadership, innovation and commitment to this field. We are inspired by the confidence that with the right resources and research teams, we will be able to make a meaningful impact towards a cure for HIV."

UNC-Chapel Hill and GSK will focus on the latest scientific approaches to curing HIV, including a leading research approach toward an HIV cure, sometimes called "shock and kill." This approach seeks to reveal the hidden virus that persists in people

with HIV infection despite successful drug therapy, and augment the patient's immune system to clear these last traces of the virus and infected cells. Part of this new paradigm was first tested at UNC-Chapel Hill and in 2012 a team led by UNC-Chapel Hill researchers demonstrated that latent HIV might be unmasked by new therapies. Recently, researchers at the university received Food and Drug Administration approval for a study in HIV-positive volunteers to combine this technique and an immune-boosting strategy.

Through the new company, GSK will invest $4 million per year for five years to fund the initial HIV Cure center research plan, and a small research team from GSK will move to Chapel Hill to be co-located with UNC researchers. The University will provide world-class laboratory space on its medical campus for the HIV Cure center and the new company. GSK will be contributing its expertise and know-how in medicines discovery, development and manufacturing, and UNC-Chapel Hill will bring to the table its research and translational medicine capabilities, talent, as well as access to patients and funding.

GSK's investment in the HIV Cure center is separate from its investment in the discovery of novel antiretroviral (ARV) therapies in support of ViiV Healthcare, a global specialist HIV company dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV and owned by GSK, Pfizer and Shionogi. GSK's HIV Discovery Performance Unit will continue its work on new ARVs in the Research Triangle Park area of North Carolina. ViiV has significant clinical expertise and will play an advisory role to the HIV Cure center and Qura Therapeutics.