

HEALTH CARE & BIOTECH



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Uniper to Expand Senior Platform

Company raises another \$15 million to drive growth

By HOWARD FINE Staff Reporter

Uniper Care Technologies, a home-based senior services content provider headquartered in Tel Aviv, Israel, with its U.S. headquarters in Palms, has raised \$14.5 million to expand its television-based platform in the United States.

Uniper's June 29 announcement said the Series A funding round was led by Palo Alto-based **Zeev Ventures** and Tel Aviv-based venture capital firm **Aleph**. Combined with two previous funding rounds, Uniper has raised nearly \$21 million.

Founded in Tel Aviv in 2016, Uniper Care's core technology is an Android-based television set-top box and remote control device with an embedded microphone that allows seniors to access and interact with an array of senior-focused content delivered through their TVs.

The content includes entertainment, assistance performing daily activities, and interactive sessions with family members or other seniors and telehealth services.



Old School: Uniper's set-top box and remote control are easy for seniors to use.

The idea is to deliver these programs and services through a medium most seniors are familiar with — their TVs — without having to master advanced apps or technologies.

The goal is to make it easier for seniors to age in place in their own homes instead of having to live in the communal settings of assisted living facilities or retirement communities.

"Uniper Care developed a breakthrough solution that helps seniors safely age with independence," **Oren Zeev**, founding partner of Zeev Ventures, said in the announcement.

While Uniper Care got its start serving senior citizens in Israel, its founders, including Chief Executive **Rami Kirshblum**, quickly realized that the United States had a much larger market, with 52 million people over the age of 65 in 2018. That year, the company used its first outside seed investment of \$2.4 million to open a U.S. headquarters in Palms. A spokeswoman said that office now has 21 employees.

In the United States, Uniper developed a business model of signing contracts with health care insurers and public and private social

service providers to cover the cost of installing the set-top boxes and crafting the programming and services for senior citizen users.

Among these paying entities: health insurers offering Medicare Advantage plans, the Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs departments, and various private nonprofits, including Jewish human services agencies.

The selling point for these payers is that by making it easier for seniors to stay at home, they won't have to seek services in more expensive environments, such as assisted living facilities. And seniors retain the opportunity to live more active lifestyles, which in turn boosts their mental and physical health.

"Hundreds of care partner organizations and some of the largest health plans in the U.S. now have a customizable platform to help seniors age healthier and happier," Kirshblum said in the announcement.

With this latest funding round in place, Uniper Care executives said they are prepared to take advantage of \$1.4 billion in new federal funding for senior services that is part of the American Rescue Plan enacted earlier this year.

Kite Joint Ventures Hit Milestones

Company signs partnership with Shoreline, wins in China

By HOWARD FINE Staff Reporter

Santa Monica-based immunotherapy company Kite, a subsidiary company of Foster City-based **Gilead Sciences Inc.**, has signed one new drug development partnership and hit a key milestone with another.

On June 17, Kite announced a strategic partnership with La Jolla-based biotech company **Shoreline Biosciences Inc.** to jointly develop new immunotherapies to treat an array of cancers.

Shoreline has experience in genetic reprogramming and using immune system tissue cells as treatment vehicles, while Kite has experience in engineering immune cells to treat cancers and other diseases.

Financial terms of the partnership were not disclosed.

Under the partnership, Kite will have the option to develop a treatment using Shoreline's therapeutic technology involving immune system tissue cells.

"We are excited about the potential of Shoreline's next-generation approach to allogeneic development and how our collaboration can accelerate this research across different leukemias and lymphomas," **Mert Aktar**, Kite's vice president of corporate development and strategy, said in the announcement.

Kite earlier this year participated in a \$43 million Series A financing for Shoreline Biosciences.

Meanwhile, a Kite joint venture achieved a key approval milestone in China.

Fosun Kite Biotechnology Co. Ltd., a joint venture between Kite and **Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical (Group) Co.**, received approval from the China National Medical Products Association for a drug to treat adult patients with certain types of lymphomas.

The approval, announced June 28, marks the first time an engineered immune cell treatment has been okayed for use in China. Kite licensed its principal drug Yescarta to the joint venture for the Chinese market.

The new drug targets several types of large B-cell lymphomas, or LBCLs, which are a subset of non-Hodgkin lymphomas. B cells, or lymphocytes, are white blood cells that manufacture antibodies to combat invading bacterial or viral cells.

"In relapsed or refractory LBCL, current standard-of-care is associated with poor long-term outcomes, so we are pleased to offer this new hope of survival for patients in China who are in need of new therapeutic options," **Terence O'Sullivan**, vice president for Kite's international division, said in the announcement.

The Fosun Kite joint venture company was established in 2017, the same year Gilead Sciences bought Kite for \$11.9 billion from bioscience entrepreneur **Arie Belldegrun**.

Uniper Care Technologies

HEADQUARTERS: Tel Aviv, Israel (global); Palms (U.S.)

FOUNDED: 2016

BUSINESS: Health care content and services for seniors

CEO: Rami Kirshblum

EMPLOYEES: 21 in Palms office; 70 in other locations

FUNDS RAISED TO DATE: \$21 million

NOTABLE: Uniper Care opened its office in Palms in 2018 as its beachhead for the huge U.S. senior market.

Test Trouble Hits Arrowhead Stock

Pharma company pauses trial of cystic fibrosis drug

By HOWARD FINE Staff Reporter

Shares of Pasadena-based **Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals Inc.** plunged 34% on July 2 to \$63.07 after the company halted trials of a drug to treat cystic fibrosis following reports of toxicity issues in tests of the drug on rats.

Investors shied away from the stock even after the company announced positive interim results on July 6 from clinical trials of another of its drugs to treat a form of renal cell carcinoma.

Since July 2, shares of Arrowhead have fluctuated around this new lower level. On July 13, the stock closed at \$63.41, roughly the same as the July 2 close.

Arrowhead has developed a drug technology platform that triggers RNA interference to silence genes that through their "expression" can cause a wide range of diseases.

The pharma company is using this technology to develop therapeutic drugs. It has nine drug candidates aiming to treat diseases, ranging from cancers to liver disease to gout to Covid-19.

It was during toxicology tests on rats of a cystic fibrosis drug candidate currently in Phase 1 testing on human subjects that researchers observed lung inflammation, triggering concerns over potential toxic side effects. The company immediately notified regulatory agencies and announced it was halting clinical trials.

"Even though the preliminary information we received from the chronic toxicology study in rats may not necessarily bear directly upon the safety of continuing the current Phase 1 study, we believe that we need to better understand the findings and how they may translate to humans before we treat additional patients," **Chris Anzalone**, Arrowhead's chief executive, said in the announcement.

"This is difficult news for cystic fibrosis patients who are in need of new therapeutic options, but we place above all else our obligation to ensure the safety of those enrolled in



Anzalone

our clinical trials," he added.

Anzalone and **Javier San Martin**, Arrowhead's chief medical officer, both said the company is now awaiting the full data from the animal toxicity studies before deciding whether to resume the clinical trial on human subjects

or end the clinical trial and further refine the drug.

On the next business day, after the July 4 holiday weekend, Arrowhead had much better news to report. It announced positive interim results from a phase 1b dose-finding clinical study of its investigational RNA interference drug to treat patients with clear cell renal cell carcinoma.

That highlighted why at least one analyst was not overly concerned about the setback with the cystic fibrosis drug.

In a July 3 research note, **Patrick Trucchio**, an equity analyst with New York-based **H.C. Wainwright & Co.**, reiterated his "buy" rating on Arrowhead's stock. He said Arrowhead has other promising drugs in its pipeline and that the sharp drop in the share price on July 2 presents investors with a buying opportunity.

Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals Inc.

HEADQUARTERS: Pasadena

FOUNDED: 1989

BUSINESS: Biopharmaceutical medicines and treatments

CEO: Christopher Anzalone

EMPLOYEES: 232

MARKET CAP: \$8.9 billion

EARNINGS: -\$26.8 million (quarter ended March 31)

NOTABLE: Arrowhead has nine drug candidates in its development pipeline.

Kite

HEADQUARTERS: Santa Monica

BUSINESS: Biopharmaceutical therapies and treatments

CEO: Christi Shaw

EMPLOYEES: 2,538

SALES OF YESCARTA: \$160 million (Q1 2021)

NOTABLE: Kite has six drugs at various stages in the development pipeline.