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## **Baruch S. Blumberg Institute launches MERLIN Biotech, a spinout company leveraging mRNA technology for therapeutics and vaccines**

***Dr. Randall N. Hyer, former senior vice president for global medical affairs at Moderna, is chief executive officer.***

Doylestown, Pa., April 22, 2022 – The Baruch S. Blumberg Institute has announced the launch of [MERLIN Biotech](#), a new platform biotechnology spinout company leveraging proven mRNA technology to develop novel therapeutics and vaccines against targets that address important unmet medical needs, including chronic hepatitis B infections, adult and pediatric cancers, and Lyme disease.

Randall N. Hyer, MD, PhD, MPH, MERLIN Biotech's chief executive officer, made the announcement during a presentation yesterday (April 21) in an online professional meeting, the Drug Discovery Virtual Nexus East Coast Philadelphia 2022. Dr. Hyer's presentation is posted [here](#).

Combined with solid technology, robust intellectual property and an experienced leadership team, MERLIN Biotech is uniquely well-situated to make significant contributions toward advancing the discovery of new cures and vaccines. MERLIN Biotech's executive management and board members include a former top Moderna executive, a Nobel Prize winner and global experts in mRNA development, oncology immune-modulators, chronic hepatitis B and preventive vaccines for Lyme disease.

"We are very excited about the prospects for MERLIN Biotech because our mRNA technology takes advantage of the latest innovations in mRNA delivery and mRNA-directed protein production," Dr. Hyer said. "These approaches are distinct from prior approaches to treat chronic hepatitis B and cancer, and we are confident in our potential to create value from our industry-leading strategy, management and pipeline to developing novel therapeutics and preventive vaccines."

The executive team at MERLIN Biotech is composed of highly experienced scientists and business leaders:

- Randall N. Hyer, MD, PhD, MPH, MERLIN Biotech chief executive officer, is the former senior vice president for global medical affairs at Moderna where he worked on approval, launch, and implementation worldwide of its mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. Prior

to Moderna, he headed clinical development and medical affairs at Dynavax, where he helped achieve approval of HEPLISAV-B, a new two-dose hepatitis B vaccine with a novel adjuvant.

- Nikhil A. Heble, PharmD, JD, MERLIN Biotech president, is a registered patent attorney trained in both law and pharmacy, and a partner in Altus Labs, a drug development and consumer product company.
- Ju-Tao Guo, MD, MERLIN Biotech chief scientific officer, is co-inventor of its hepatitis B technologies and the Blumberg Institute's senior vice president for research and W. Thomas London Professor. Dr. Guo has with decades of research experience in molecular virology and antiviral research of hepatitis viruses, flaviviruses and human coronaviruses.
- Louis P. Kassa, III, MPA, MERLIN Biotech chief business officer, is executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center, one of the nation's most successful life-sciences incubators, and the affiliated Blumberg Institute and Hepatitis B Foundation.
- Ian Henrich, PhD, MERLIN Biotech vice president of oncology and company co-founder, is co-inventor of USP6 mRNA technology and will spearhead the commercialization of USP6 and lead the discovery and development of additional oncology assets.
- Timothy M. Block, PhD, MERLIN Biotech board chair and company co-founder, is co-inventor of its hepatitis B technologies and an internationally recognized leader in virology and drug discovery. He also is founder and president of the three related nonprofit organizations: the Blumberg Institute, Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center and Hepatitis B Foundation.

MERLIN Biotech's Scientific Advisory Board is composed of Harvey J. Alter, MD, 2020 Nobel Prize Laureate in Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of the hepatitis C virus; Stanley A. Plotkin, MD, world-renowned vaccinologist and former medical and scientific director of Sanofi Pasteur; and Margaret Chou, PhD, associate professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia/University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and co-inventor of the USP6 mRNA cancer immunotherapeutic technology being developed by MERLIN Biotech.

## **Forward Looking Statements**

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, as amended, regarding Merlin Biotech's development of mRNA therapeutics and vaccines against adult and pediatric cancer, chronic diseases like hepatitis B, and infectious diseases such as Lyme disease. The forward-looking statements in this press release are neither promises nor guarantees, and you should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements because they involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors, many of which are beyond Merlin's control and which could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements. Except as required by law, Merlin disclaims any intention or responsibility for updating or revising any forward-looking statements contained in this press release in the event of new information, future developments or otherwise. These forward-looking statements are based on Merlin's current expectations and speak only as of the date hereof.

## **About MERLIN Biotech**

MERLIN Biotech is a platform start-up innovative biotechnology spinout from the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute. It leverages proven mRNA technology to develop novel therapeutics and vaccines against targets that address important unmet medical needs, including chronic hepatitis B infections, adult and pediatric cancers, and Lyme disease. MERLIN Biotech is located near major academic clinical research centers and supported scientifically by the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute and the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center, a nationally recognized life-sciences incubator. Combined with solid technology, robust intellectual property and an experienced leadership team, MERLIN Biotech is uniquely well-situated for making significant contributions towards advancing the discovery of new cures and preventive vaccines. For more information, go to [www.merlinbiotech.com](http://www.merlinbiotech.com).

## **About the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute**

An independent, nonprofit research organization, the Blumberg Institute was established in 2003 by the Hepatitis B Foundation to advance its research mission. Today, the Institute is one of the nation's leading centers for translational research, particularly for hepatitis B and liver cancer. The Institute supports drug discovery, biomarker discovery and translational biotechnology around common research themes such as chronic hepatitis, liver disease and liver cancer in an environment conducive to interaction, collaboration and



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focus. The Blumberg Institute is located in the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center, which it manages, near Doylestown, Pa. For more, go to [www.blumberginstitute.org](http://www.blumberginstitute.org) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@BlumbergInstit1).