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Nimbus Therapeutics Raises \$43M Series B Round, Plans Clinical Trials of NASH Drug*Brian Gormley**March 18, 2015*

Nimbus Therapeutics LLC has raised a \$43 million Series B round to launch clinical trials of an oral drug designed to disrupt an early process in a common liver disease known as NASH.

Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis is characterized by fat, inflammation and fibrosis in the liver. No treatments are approved for the disease, which affects 2% to 5% of Americans, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Several companies are advancing potential treatments, including publicly traded **Intercept Pharmaceuticals Inc.**, which is developing obeticholic acid, a drug with liver-protective qualities in clinical testing for NASH and other chronic liver diseases.

In NASH, fat accumulates in the liver, leading to the death of liver cells and fibrosis. The fat appears to be synthesized predominantly in the liver. Nimbus's lead drug inhibits Acetyl CoA Carboxylase, a master regulator of fatty acid synthesis and oxidation. Inhibiting this enzyme could disrupt the synthesis of lipids and prevent downstream harm caused by fat accumulation.

Researchers have struggled to develop drugs against Acetyl CoA Carboxylase because of the difficulty of developing compounds to the enzyme's binding site. Nimbus's product is an allosteric drug that targets a different region. The company is directing its first inhibitor of this enzyme to NASH. Other compounds aimed at this enzyme could treat diseases such as hepatocellular carcinoma, the most common liver cancer.

In hepatocellular carcinoma, inhibiting this enzyme could rob rapidly dividing cancer cells of their ability to make new membranes, according to Chief Executive Donald Nicholson. Unlike the NASH drug, which targets muscle cells as well as the liver, a Nimbus compound for hepatocellular carcinoma would target the liver only.

Nimbus plans to move its NASH drug into Phase I clinical trials this year and expects to launch Phase II clinical trials in 2016, according to Dr. Nicholson. This round will fund the Cambridge, Mass., company for two to three years. Over that period it also expects to advance one or more of its earlier-stage programs into clinical trials, according to Dr. Nicholson.

The company has changed its name to Nimbus Therapeutics from **Nimbus Discovery** to reflect its move into clinical development.

Lightstone Ventures and **Pfizer Venture Investments** led the round, which also included prior backers Atlas Venture, SR One and Bill Gates. Nimbus has now raised a total of about \$67 million, according to Dr. Nicholson.

www.nimbustx.com

Write to Brian Gormley at brian.gormley@wsj.com

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