

Published on FierceBiotech (<http://www.fiercebiotech.com>)

Pfizer jumps on the microbiome bandwagon with expansive Second Genome deal

May 2, 2014 | By Damian Garde

Months removed from a field-affirming deal with Johnson & Johnson ([\\$JNJ](#)), [Second Genome](#) has struck up another Big Pharma partnership, teaming up with Pfizer ([\\$PFE](#)) to launch a sizable study in hopes of better understanding the link between [obesity](#) and the [microbiome](#).

The microbiome is made up of more than 100 trillion microorganisms living in the body, and, thanks to the explosive growth of genomics, scientists are beginning to chart just how this inner-space ecosystem affects human health. San Bruno, CA's Second Genome is among a crop of nascent biotechs working to ferret out drug targets in the microbiome, mining for therapeutic mechanisms in the gut.

Now, with Pfizer in tow, Second Genome plans to study 900 people with varying metabolic phenotypes, working to better understand the relationship between microbiomic profiles and metabolic disorders, including obesity. The patient cohort, recruited by a team of researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital's cardiology wing, has already helped investigators identify a diabetes-resisting gene, and Second Genome CEO Peter DiLaura said the study could yield similar progress for obesity.

"Our relationship with Pfizer on a study of this size and magnitude is needed to potentially shift our understanding of this runaway epidemic and find fresh approaches to treating metabolic disease," DiLaura said in a statement.

And the potential is already there: Recent animal studies have established that changes in the gut microbiome can affect symptoms of metabolic disease, according to Second Genome, including a study in which the introduction of certain microbes was found to spur weight loss in mice.

It's early days yet for Second Genome and its microbiomic compatriots, but the support of Pfizer and J&J--which is working with the biotech on early-stage work in inflammatory bowel disease--goes a long way in lending credence to the science.

Since J&J and Second Genome hooked up in July, microbiome-focused biotechs have continued to make waves around the industry. In November, [Flagship Ventures](#) put up \$10.5 million to help launch Seres Health, an upstart with technology designed to use microbiomics to treat infectious

disease. Just this week, France's Enterome Bioscience closed an \$11.5 million funding tranche to support its gut microbiome R&D efforts.

Second Genome has raised \$11.5 million in Series A cash from investors including Advanced Technology Ventures, [Morgenthaler](#) and co-founder [Corey Goodman](#), a biotech veteran who previously served as president of Pfizer's Biotherapeutics and Bioinnovation Center.

- read the [release](#)

Related Articles:

[Enterome raises \\$11.5M for gut microbiome R&D](#)

[Flagship Ventures launches a biotech on the human microbiome sea](#)

[Johnson & Johnson takes rare gamble on microbiome science of biotech startup](#)

Source URL: <http://www.fiercebiotech.com/story/pfizer-jumps-microbiome-bandwagon-expansive-second-genome-deal/2014-05-02>