

**VERSANT VENTURES STRENGTHENS GLOBAL TEAM**

***-- Announces Investment Team Promotions and Additions; New Discovery Engine Appointments --***

SAN FRANCISCO – April 12, 2016 – Versant Ventures, a leading global healthcare venture capital firm, today announced promotions and an addition to its investment team, as well as appointments at its discovery engines in Toronto and New York City.

Versant promoted Jerel Davis to Managing Director and Carlo Rizzuto to Partner. The firm also hired Luca Santarelli as Venture Partner.

The firm's Toronto-based discovery engine Blueline Bioscience appointed Mary Haak-Frendscho as CEO and New York City-based Highline Therapeutics added CSO Joe Vacca and Operating Partner Paul Sekhri.

"These leadership additions will be critical to our global biotech investment strategy and the firm's company creation efforts," said Brad Bolzon, Managing Director, Versant Ventures. "Jerel and Carlo are proven entrepreneurs and investors who have collectively been involved in 20 Versant investments across multiple areas of innovation. The additions of Luca, Mary, Joe and Paul will strengthen our global operating capabilities in diverse geographies including Basel, Toronto and New York."

Global Investment Team

As Managing Director, Jerel Davis will continue to build Versant's biotech portfolio and strong presence in Canada and North America. Since joining Versant in 2011, Jerel has played key roles in several innovative biotech company investments including Quanticel Pharmaceuticals, CRISPR Therapeutics, Novira Therapeutics, Northern Biologics and Turnstone Biologics. He has been a major driver in creating startups from the Inception Sciences and Blueline Bioscience discovery engines, which included build-to-buy transactions with several pharmaceutical partners. Jerel demonstrated leadership for Versant's global investment strategy, built a deep network within several world-class academic institutes and established operating sites for the firm in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. He will continue to operate from the Versant Vancouver office, co-located with one of the Inception Sciences research sites. Prior to joining Versant, Jerel was associate principal at McKinsey & Company. Jerel earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University.

As Partner, Carlo Rizzuto will anchor Versant's investment operations in the Northeast and will build on the firm's emerging network of entrepreneurs and academic relationships in the region. In 2012, Carlo joined Versant's European investment team in Basel, Switzerland, and played a key role in the launch and support of several promising startups including Mosaic Biomedicals, Piquor Therapeutics and Gensight Biologics, and led the Astellas build-to-buy deal with Anokion S.A. In 2015, Carlo relocated to NYC to establish the firm's investment office, and to launch the Highline Therapeutics discovery engine aimed at creating a portfolio of innovative biotech startups in partnership with local academic institutes. Kyras Therapeutics was the first company to be launched from these efforts, and several additional seed programs are under development by the Highline team. Carlo joined Versant from Novartis where he held leadership roles in the drug development organization. Carlo completed his Ph.D. at Harvard University.

Luca Santarelli is a seasoned pharmaceutical executive who will join the Versant investment team in Basel, Switzerland, as Venture Partner. In addition to his training as both a discovery scientist and clinician, Luca brings deep operating experience from his progressive leadership responsibilities at Roche, most recently serving as Senior Vice President and Global Head of Neuroscience, Ophthalmology and Rare Diseases. In this capacity, he built a multi-disciplinary team and led efforts spanning from drug discovery to early development. Luca also provided strategic and operational leadership for many of the Roche external biotech collaborations, and helped

instill a more entrepreneurial culture in the broader R&D organization. Luca will play operating or board roles in select portfolio companies and will work with members of Versant's Basel-based team to identify new biotech investment opportunities. Luca received his medical and scientific training at the University of Turin, and post-doctorate training at Columbia University where he also co-founded a venture backed startup while on faculty.

#### Versant Discovery Engines

##### *Blueline Bioscience*

As the CEO of Blueline Bioscience, Mary Haak-Frendscho will lead company creation and incubation efforts in partnership with academics and entrepreneurs in Ontario and throughout Canada. Blueline launched in 2013 to seed a portfolio of future biotech investment opportunities from scientific discoveries in the region. Mary has a 25-year career of establishing and building biotech organizations to discover and develop novel therapeutics. She currently serves on the board of directors of Northern Biologics and Sirenas. Mary previously served as CEO at Igenica, chairman of Compugen, CSO of Takeda SF USA Inc., and held R&D leadership roles at Genentech, Abgenix and XOMA. She holds degrees from the University of Michigan, Washington University, Stony Brook University and the University of Wisconsin.

##### *Highline Therapeutics*

The appointment of Joe Vacca as CSO strengthens Highline's leadership team in New York. Joe is a 30-year Merck veteran recognized for making major contributions to the discovery and development of approved drugs including Zepatier™, Crixivan™, Isentress™, Vanihep™ and products in clinical development and registration. With over 100 publications and patents, Joe holds multiple awards for his achievements, including being named to the American Chemical Society Medicinal Chemistry Hall of Fame. Most recently, he was Senior Vice President of Early Success Sharing Partnerships at WuXi Aptec. Joe earned his Ph.D. at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Paul Sekhri joins Highline as an Operating Partner, and brings extensive biopharma entrepreneurial, operating and business development experience to the team. Paul will remain President and CEO of Lycera, where he recently closed an exclusive global collaboration and option deal with Celgene. Previously, Paul held a range of operating and business development roles with Sanofi, Teva Pharmaceuticals, TPG Biotech, Cerimon Pharmaceuticals, ARIAD Pharmaceuticals and Novartis, and has served as a director on 16 private and public company boards. Paul completed graduate work and holds a B.S. from the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

#### **About Versant Ventures**

Versant Ventures is a leading global healthcare investment firm committed to helping exceptional entrepreneurs build the next generation of great healthcare companies. The firm invests across the healthcare sector and at all stages of company development, with an emphasis on the discovery and development of novel therapeutics. With \$1.9 billion under management and offices in North America and Europe, Versant has built a team with deep investment, operating, and scientific expertise that enables a hands-on approach to company building. Since the firm's founding in 1999, nearly 50 Versant companies have achieved successful acquisitions or IPOs. For more information, please visit [www.versantventures.com](http://www.versantventures.com).

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