



News Release

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany Collaborates with Versant Ventures to Launch Saturnus Bio to Advance Treatments for Rare Genetic Cardiomyopathies

- **Saturnus Bio is a next-generation precision cardiology company that utilizes targeted gene modulation to address rare mono-genetic cardiomyopathies with significant unmet need**
- **The collaboration will augment Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany's efforts to pursue precision medicine-defined indications**

Darmstadt, Germany June 23, 2026 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading global science and technology company, today announced a strategic research-stage collaboration with Saturnus Bio, a Versant Ventures-founded biotech, aimed at establishing a foundational portfolio in the promising field of rare genetic cardiomyopathies. This partnership aligns with the company's commitment to address significant unmet medical needs in rare populations through targeted treatments.

"Through our partnership with Saturnus Bio, we aim to fast track the development of innovative therapies for genetic cardiomyopathies through precision cardiology, targeting the rare population impacted by these conditions," said David Weinreich, MD, Head of Research and Development and Chief Medical Officer at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. "By leveraging Saturnus' expertise and cutting-edge approach, we can build upon our armed antibodies capabilities and explore novel directions to rapidly bring new, targeted treatments to patients."





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“The launch of Saturnus through a foundational partnership with Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany exemplifies Versant’s strategy of engaging with pharma to develop a new frontier of medicines in areas of important unmet medical need,” said Rick Dewey, MD, an entrepreneur-in-residence at Versant Ventures and CEO of Saturnus. “The company is in strong position to accelerate development of its pipeline of first-in-class medicines for genetic cardiomyopathies.”

The research-stage partnership entails a build-to-buy deal structure, including an upfront payment of \$50 million from Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany to fund Saturnus' research activities, securing a minority equity stake in the company, as well as additional success-based preclinical milestones, supporting the development of novel drug candidates for genetic cardiomyopathy patients. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany has exclusive rights to acquire Saturnus for a pre-determined option payment in addition to success-based earnouts.

The strategic partnership will focus on next-generation precision cardiology that utilizes targeted gene modulation to address rare mono-genetic cardiomyopathies with significant unmet need. Genetic cardiomyopathies represent a vital entry point for Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany's cardiovascular business, addressing a significant unmet need in a market characterized by no approved therapies for genetic drivers.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is committed to leveraging advanced technologies and data science to accelerate the discovery and delivery of breakthrough medicines. This partnership reinforces its broader strategy to enhance research productivity and the output of its pipeline sustainably, focusing on indications that can be derisked through proper preclinical and early clinical testing to ensure that more patients gain access to effective treatments.

About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, operates across life science, healthcare and electronics. More than 62,000 employees work to make a positive difference to millions of people’s lives every day by creating more joyful and sustainable ways to live. From providing products and services that accelerate drug development and manufacturing as well as discovering unique ways to treat the most challenging diseases to enabling the intelligence of devices – the company is everywhere. In 2025, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of €21.1 billion in 65 countries.



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The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark "Merck" internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, operate as MilliporeSigma in life science, EMD Serono in healthcare and EMD Electronics in electronics. Since its founding in 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company's technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.

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