

VIPC Awards CCF Grant to UVA for Commercialization of Novel Therapeutic to Treat Pulmonary Fibrosis

Dr. Thomas Barker is advancing an antibody treatment that shows early signs of halting disease progression as well as generating new lung tissue

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, March 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation ([VIPC](#)) today announced that the University of Virginia has been



awarded a Commonwealth Commercialization Fund ([CCF](#)) grant for \$200,000 in support of research conducted by Dr. Thomas Barker. VIPC's CCF programs have distributed more than \$55 million to Virginia-based startups, entrepreneurs, and university-based inventors since 2012 in support of critical early technology testing and market validation efforts.

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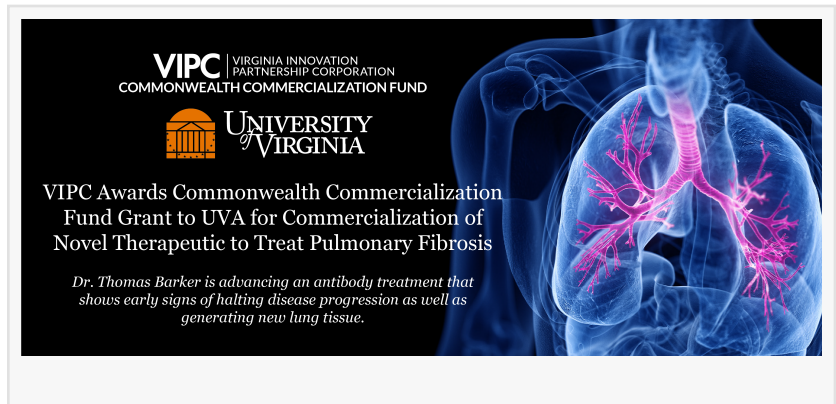
Dr. Thomas Barker, University of Virginia

Fibrosis is a pathological endpoint for most chronic inflammatory diseases and is implicated in roughly 45% of deaths worldwide. For idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) in particular, an interstitial lung disease that leads to respiratory failure and ultimately death, the median survival window is two to three years post-diagnosis. Despite such a poor prognosis, there is a striking lack of therapeutic options to slow or reverse fibrotic progression. Until now. Responding to a pressing unmet clinical need and mounting interest, Barker and his team have

developed a novel antibody treatment that has shown efficacy in not only halting lung fibrosis progression but reversing it by triggering lung tissue regeneration.

“Lung fibrosis is a ruthless, deadly disease and unfortunately, the drugs available on the market today, although considered ‘successful’, often do more harm to the patient than receiving no treatment at all. Patients that are facing this death sentence deserve safe and more efficacious

drugs, which is where our therapeutic comes in,” said Barker, Professor of Biomedical Engineering at [UVA](#). “As soon as we saw the effect the antibody was having in treating aggressive models of lung fibrosis, we knew we were on to something important, and that we needed to push this technology into clinics.”



The CCF grant is a critical stepping stone in the commercialization of the patent-pending therapeutic. With the funding, Barker will complete key experimental studies that validate the formulation of the current drug product and consult with experts to ensure the team is on track for seeking and receiving eventual FDA clearance. A biotech startup, Vasarya Therapeutics, has been set up and intends to commercialize the new treatment as well as future treatments across other fibrotic indications. CCF funding will also support the transition of the technology from UVA to the company.

“Fibrosis is a broad disease indication with an ever-growing patient population. The antibody-based therapeutic that Dr. Barker is developing offers new hope for patients suffering from pulmonary fibrosis and has the potential to benefit the larger fibrosis market too,” said Hina Mehta, VIPC’s Director for University Programs. “We see this opportunity as a true medical game-changer and could not be more delighted to be a part of its development and path to market.”

About UVA Health

UVA Health is an academic health system that recently expanded to include four hospitals across Charlottesville, Culpeper, and Northern Virginia, along with the UVA School of Medicine, UVA School of Nursing, UVA Physicians Group, and the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library. With more than 1,000 inpatient beds, approximately 40,000 inpatient stays annually, and more than 1 million outpatient encounters annually at UVA Health, more than 1,000 employed and independent physicians provide high-quality, comprehensive, and specialized care to patients across the Commonwealth and beyond. Founded in 1819 as just the 10th medical school in America, the UVA School of Medicine – with 20 clinical departments, eight basic science departments, and six research centers – consistently attracts some of the nation’s most prominent researchers to develop breakthrough treatments to benefit patients around the world. Those research efforts are backed by more than \$200 million in grant funding. UVA Health Children's is recognized as the No. 1 hospital in Virginia for children by U.S. News & World Report, with nine specialties rated among the top in America. More than 230 UVA physicians are honored on the Best Doctors in America list. For more information, resources, and to follow us on social media, please visit www.uvahealth.com.

About UVA Engineering □ As part of the top-ranked, comprehensive University of Virginia, UVA Engineering is one of the nation’s oldest and most respected engineering schools. Our mission is

to make the world a better place by creating and disseminating knowledge and by preparing future engineering leaders. Outstanding students and faculty from around the world choose UVA Engineering because of our growing and internationally recognized education and research programs. UVA is among the top engineering schools in the United States for the four-year graduation rate of undergraduate students and among the top-growing public engineering schools in the country for the rate of Ph.D. enrollment growth. Learn more at www.engineering.virginia.edu.

About Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC)

Connecting innovators with opportunities. As the nonprofit operations arm of the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (VIPA), VIPC is the commercialization and seed stage economic development driver in the Commonwealth that leads funding, infrastructure, and policy initiatives to support Virginia's innovators, entrepreneurs, startups, and market development strategies. VIPC also collaborates with local, regional, state, and federal partners to support the expansion and diversification of Virginia's economy.

Programs include: Virginia Venture Partners (VVP) | VVP Fund of Funds | Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) | Petersburg Founders Fund (PFF) | Smart Communities | The Virginia Smart Community Testbed | The Virginia Unmanned Systems Center | Virginia Advanced Air Mobility Alliance (VAAMA) | The Public Safety Innovation Center (PSIC) | Entrepreneurial Ecosystems | Regional Innovation Fund (RIF) | Federal Funding Assistance Program (FFAP) for SBIR & STTR | University Partnerships | Startup Company Mentoring & Engagement.

For more information, please visit www.VirginialPC.org. Explore the latest news from VIPC and images from VIPC-supported stakeholder events. Follow VIPC on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn.

About the Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF)

VIPC's Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) accepts applications and awards funding on a rolling basis to Virginia's small businesses and university-based innovators. For Virginia's academic and nonprofit research community, the competitive grant program seeks to fund high-potential Virginia-based academic research teams that are developing technologies with strong commercial potential. The grants support early technology and market validation efforts such as customer discovery, market research, business model validation, the development of prototypes or minimum viable products (MVPs), customer pilots, and intellectual property protection, team development, and more. For more information on funding opportunities and eligibility requirements, or to apply, visit the CCF pages from www.VirginialPC.org.

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