

# VIPC Awards Technology Commercialization Grant to UVA Health for Promising First-in-Class Therapy to Treat Brain Cancer

*Urgent need for safe, effective treatment for fatal form of brain cancer drives Dr. Hui Li to pursue small molecule inhibitors as novel therapeutic.*

RICHMOND, VA, UNITED STATES, January 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation \(VIPC\)](#) today announced that [UVA Health](#)

“

People are dying from this terrible disease and right now, there is nothing that can help them... We look forward to eventually offering a better treatment and a bit more hope to those afflicted.”

*Dr. Hui Li, Professor of Pathology, UVA School of Medicine*

has been awarded a Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) grant for \$100,000 to expand research conducted by Dr. Hui Li. Li is focused on improving the survival rate for patients with highly malignant brain tumors, a condition currently lacking any effective treatment.

Most patients diagnosed with glioblastoma (GBM), the most common and deadliest form of brain cancer, die within three years. The current standard of care can extend life expectancy by only weeks, so a critical need for new treatment options exists. Over the last decade, Li and his team of researchers at the University of Virginia School

of Medicine identified a novel oncogene, dubbed AVIL, and have developed small molecule inhibitors to target it. Li's research has shown that AVIL is overexpressed in all GBM cell lines and clinical samples, yet hardly detectable in normal cells or tissues. His research has also uncovered that GBM patients with increased AVIL expression have a worse prognosis than their counterparts. It is believed that AVIL may be an “Achilles heel” of GBM and targeting it with Li's novel compounds shows promise in delivering effective and safe therapy approach for the disease.

“When we uncovered a new driver in GBM, many people reached out to us with encouragement and interest, including patients, family members, and foundations. People are dying from this terrible disease and right now, there is nothing that can help them. But hearing from these people and hearing their urgency motivated us to do whatever it takes to push our discovery forward. We look forward to eventually offering a better treatment and a bit more hope to those

afflicted,” said Li, Professor of Pathology at UVA School of Medicine.

VIPC President and CEO, Joe Benevento, said, “Virginia and its world renown university research and health institutions have a rich history of life science discoveries that not only improve but literally save lives. VIPC is proud to help accelerate promising bio research at early stages of development that offer significant impact and commercialization opportunity, exemplified by Dr. Li’s novel research at UVA Health to address the most common and deadliest form of brain cancer worldwide.”

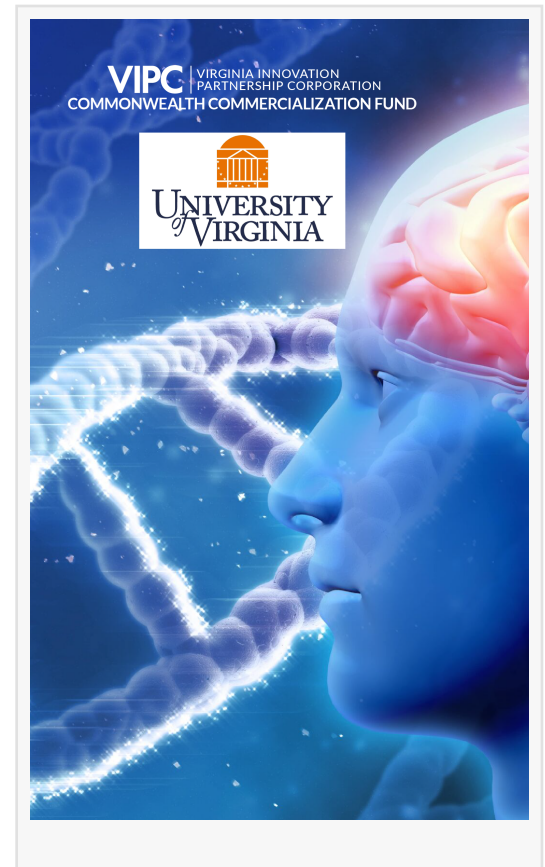
The CCF grant, along with matching funds from a National Institutes of Health (NIH) ROI1 grant, will be used to refine and test a new formulation of the small molecule compounds, which shows early promise in being safer on animals. These efforts will be instrumental for de-risking future commercialization activity. Li has spun out a company in Virginia, OncoTargeting LLC, to license the technology once more efficacy and toxicity data is ready.

#### 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](http://www.uvahealth.com).

#### About Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC)

Connecting innovators with opportunities. VIPC operates as the nonprofit corporation on behalf of the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (VIPA). VIPA / VIPC is Virginia’s designated authority for leading innovation and economic development in the Commonwealth of Virginia



through research, commercialization, and technology advancement; entrepreneurship, startup, and venture capital growth; and regional ecosystem, innovation network, and industry sector expansion. As part of its operations, VIPC helps attract and catalyze private investment into early-stage startup companies, provides research and technology commercialization grants to universities and entrepreneurs, and offers resource and funding support for entrepreneurial ecosystems, innovation networks, and public-private partnerships at local, state, federal levels.

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

For more information, please visit [www.VIPC.org](http://www.VIPC.org). Explore the latest news from VIPC and images from VIPC-supported stakeholder events. Follow VIPC on Facebook, X, and LinkedIn.

#### About the Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF)

VIPC's Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) accepts applications and awards funding to university research partners and entrepreneurial startups at the earliest stages of technology commercialization along the innovation continuum. These commercialization grants support R&D and early technology and market validation efforts such as the development of prototypes or minimum viable products (MVPs), customer pilots, and intellectual property protection. For more information on CCF funding opportunities and eligibility requirements, or to apply, visit [www.VIPC.org](http://www.VIPC.org).

Jennifer Hiltwine

VIPC

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/775625574>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.