



**Arctos Medical, a Swiss start-up developing optogenetic therapies for treating blindness, is acquired by Novartis**

Basel, September 21, 2021 — Arctos Medical, a Swiss start-up developing optogenetic therapies, announced today that it has been acquired by Novartis.

More than two million people globally experience progressive vision loss from genetic diseases called inherited retinal dystrophies (IRDs). Often resulting in complete blindness, these diseases are caused by mutations in many different genes – but existing treatments target a single gene responsible for vision loss in a small number of patients. For patients with IRDs caused by any other gene – and for many other patients with different forms of vision loss, such as macular degeneration – there are no curative treatments available.

Arctos is developing technology for the treatment of blindness associated with retinal degenerative diseases, based on the work of its scientific founders, Drs. Sonja Kleinlogel and Michiel van Wyk of the University of Bern. The therapeutic approach is to create “replacement photoreceptors” with an optogene delivered to and expressed in specific retinal cells using adeno-associated virus (AAV) gene therapy technology. The design of the optogene allows for fast and diverse retinal responses to ambient light. When activated by the optogene, the targeted cells engage intraretinal circuits to maximize the quality of the visual code sent to the brain.

The Arctos technology potentially addresses many forms of IRDs, regardless of the causative mutations, making it possible to address a significantly larger population of patients than existing treatments.

“We are thrilled that Novartis recognizes the potential value and differentiated profile of Arctos’ unique optogenetics technology,” said Kostas Kaloulis, CEO of Arctos and venture partner at +ND Capital. “As a global ophthalmology leader, Novartis is ideally positioned to rapidly advance our program into the clinic. We look forward to progressing the technology to deliver transformative therapies for underserved patients.”

**About Arctos Medical**

ARCTOS Medical AG (former Haag-Streit Medtech AG), was the 1st Swiss Gene Therapy company, a University of Bern spin off. Arctos was later identified and incubated by +ND Capital, as part of its company creation program, and was later supported by Novartis Venture Fund through a Series A financing round led by +ND Capital.