Dilafor initiates collaboration with Liverpool University to study the effect of tafoxiparin on SARS-CoV-2

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN – April , 17 2020. Dilafor announces today that a research group at Liverpool University intends to initiate a preclinical research study to investigate the potential inhibitory effect of Dilafor's pharmaceutical drug candidate tafoxiparin on SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing Covid-19.

Dilafor's pharmaceutical drug candidate tafoxiparin is a unique, proprietary substance mimicking heparan sulfate, an endogenous molecule found on cell surfaces. Tafoxiparin is developed primarily to avoid complications affecting the mother and her infant during childbirth. The drug candidate is currently undergoing a phase 2 clinical trial in an obstetric indication.

Tafoxiparin has important structural similarities to heparin – an anticoagulant used to prevent and treat thrombosis. A limiting side effect from heparin is hemorrhage. This risk is not present with tafoxiparin since the substance lacks anticoagulative properties. It has been shown in experimental studies that heparin has an effect on several types of viruses – SARS-associated coronavirus, herpes, influenza and HIV. However, clinical evaluations of heparin's effect on these viruses have been hampered due to the risk of hemorrhage in patients. Researchers at Liverpool University have recently provided evidence that heparin binds to the "spike protein" on the cell surface of SARS-CoV-2 which the virus uses to attach to and invade human cells. By physically blocking interactions with this protein, the ability of the virus to attack human cells could be impeded. There are also preliminary data indicating that non-coagulative heparin-like substances, such as tafoxiparin, exhibit similar promising qualities.

Liverpool University, in partnership with Keele University, has established a preclinical platform enabling fast screenings of different substances' effects on SARS-CoV-2 interactions with heparan sulfate and cells. Tafoxiparin is one of the drug candidates which the research group will now study in order to find an effective treatment of patients who've been struck by the virus. Dilafor will support the British research groups in the endeavor by providing tafoxiparin, as well as by sharing the company's internal data and in-house knowledge on the drug candidate.

"Dilafor highly welcome this initiative from professor Turnbull and we are looking forward to work on this important mission together with the University of Liverpool", says Lena Wikingsson CEO of Dilafor.

"We are convinced about the potential for non-anticoagulant heparan sulfate mimetics to be used to target mechanisms of SARS-CoV-2 infection causing Covid-19 disease, so we are pleased to have the opportunity to work with Dilafor on their drug candidate tafoxiparin" says Prof Jeremy Turnbull, Professor of Biochemistry at Liverpool University.

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TO THE EDITORS

About Dilafor AB

Dilafor AB is a Swedish drug development company focusing on the development of tafoxiparin for obstetric indications. The company's primary goal is to decrease the incidence of slow progress of labor both after induction of labor and after spontaneous onset of labor. The main owner of Dilafor is KDev Investments AB, which is jointly owned by Karolinska Development AB (publ) and Rosetta Capital IV. The other main owners are The Foundation for Baltic and European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen) and Praktikerinvest. For more information, please visit: www.dilafor.com.