



# ViaNautis

## **ViaNautis Bio announces \$25 million Series A financing to drive the next generation of genetic nanomedicines**

- *ViaNautis's proprietary drug delivery platform polyNaut® is designed to deliver genetic therapeutic payloads across difficult-to-penetrate biological barriers, developing new medicines for diseases with unmet clinical need*
- *Series A led by 4BIO Capital, BGF, and UCB Ventures with participation from the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Eli Lilly and Company and existing investors including Origin Capital, Meltwind and O2H*

**Cambridge UK, 13 November 2023** – ViaNautis Bio (“ViaNautis” or the “Company”), a groundbreaking nanomedicine company at the forefront of genetic therapies, is excited to announce the successful completion of its Series A funding round, raising \$25 million (£20 million). Formerly known as SomaServe, ViaNautis has secured support from a consortium of prominent global investors enabling the advancement of its proprietary drug delivery platform – polyNaut®.

ViaNautis's Series A fundraise was led by 4BIO Capital, BGF and UCB Ventures with the additional participation of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Eli Lilly and Company and existing investors including Origin Capital, Meltwind and O2H. The proceeds from the round will fuel the rapid development of products using the polyNaut® platform, expand the scientific and management teams and establish industry-leading laboratory facilities.

ViaNautis's polyNaut® platform applies advanced polymer materials and in silico screening to precisely guide genetic molecules such as pDNA, mRNA, siRNA and ASOs to their intended targets. Unlike conventional drug delivery methods, polyNaut® tackles the challenge of transporting genetic materials across biological barriers, advancing medicines for conditions with pressing unmet clinical needs, such as Cystic Fibrosis - a multisystemic disease affecting the lungs, pancreas, and other organs - and central nervous system (CNS) diseases. The company's pipeline includes VNS002, supported by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, focusing on identifying optimal formulation candidates for targeted delivery to the conducting airways in the lungs.

ViaNautis was spun out of UCL in 2018 by co-founders Dr Francesca Crawford, Dr Denis Cecchin, and Professor Giuseppe Battaglia, inventor of polyNaut® and honorary professor at UCL. Professor Battaglia is also an ICREA professor and head of the Molecular Bionics Group at the Institute for Bioengineering of Catalonia, part of the Barcelona Institute for Science and Technology (IBEC).

**Francesca Crawford, CEO of ViaNautis, commented:** *"This successful fundraise empowers us to expedite the deployment of our proprietary polyNaut® technology, which offers unparalleled access to the brain and other tissues, presenting significant opportunities to address both CNS and lung diseases. We are delighted to welcome our new investors and appreciate the support of our existing shareholders. We are also proud to be working with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation on one of our key pipeline programmes, underscoring our commitment to advancing treatments for people with cystic fibrosis and other unmet clinical needs. This fundraise marks a pivotal moment in ViaNautis's journey and we look forward to advancing the field of gene therapy, while creating substantial value for our shareholders."*

**Owen Smith, Partner at 4BIO Capital, commented:** *“As the cell and gene therapy field gains momentum, it is evident that safe and precise delivery remains a key bottleneck in developing new therapeutics. ViaNautis presents an excellent opportunity in the world of genetic therapies by enabling the delivery of cargoes to otherwise inaccessible sites of action in the body. The polyNaut® technology overcomes the limitations of other drug delivery methods and presents a unique pathway to developing a new generation of genetic medicines for patients with few or no other treatment options.”*

**Lucy Edwardes Jones, Investor at BGF, commented:** *“ViaNautis’s polyNaut® technology represents a unique opportunity in the field of genetic therapies. This breakthrough creates a path for the development of innovative treatments for diseases that have remained unaddressed for too long. We are looking forward to supporting the team’s ambitious plans and collaborating closely with our co-investors to see this technology through to impact.”*

**Steven Biesmans, Principal at UCB Ventures, commented:** *“Being part of ViaNautis’s journey, we’re excited about the immense promise of the polyNaut® technology. It opens a plethora of novel prospects in the world of genetic therapies, offering the ability to reach previously inaccessible treatment sites. PolyNaut® addresses a critical need, as many patients currently have limited or no treatment options.”*

**\*ENDS\***

For further information on the company please visit [www.vianautis.com](http://www.vianautis.com) or contact:

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**About ViaNautis**

ViaNautis, formerly known as SomaServe, was founded in 2018 as a spin-off from UCL under the leadership of CEO and serial entrepreneur, Dr Francesca Crawford. The company’s core mission is to exploit the unique capabilities of the revolutionary polyNaut® technology.

PolyNaut® is a versatile nano-engineered polymer technology designed for targeted intracellular delivery. This innovative technology enables polymer nanoparticles to deliver a wide range of payloads from small molecules to genetic materials creating 'a bionic nanoparticle.' The highly adaptable polymer structure of polyNaut® can be formulated to encapsulate a wide array of genetic cargoes, with sizes exceeding current standards for viral and non-viral delivery. Notably, it enhances the therapeutic efficacy of encapsulated molecules through direct delivery to the cell cytoplasm, facilitated by GOTO® technology for intracellular shuttling.

PolyNaut® is set apart from conventional non-viral delivery technologies through its remarkable ability to target specific cells and penetrate biological barriers, including the challenging blood-brain barrier. PolyNaut® nanoparticles, when functionalised for CNS delivery through transcytosis, exhibit exceptional brain uptake.

Deploying its state-of-the-art polyNaut® platform, ViaNautis is at the forefront of pioneering new therapies for CNS diseases and cystic fibrosis. The company is actively building an internal pipeline and collaborating with leading pharmaceutical and biotech companies to unlock the potential of promising genetic molecules as well as new therapeutic platforms.

For more information, connect with us on <https://www.linkedin.com/company/vianautis/> and visit [www.vianautis.com](http://www.vianautis.com).

#### **About 4BIO Capital**

4BIO Capital (“4BIO”) is an international venture capital firm focused on investing in advanced therapies, including genomic medicines and other emerging technologies, to unlock the treatments of the future. 4BIO’s objective is to invest in, support, and grow early-stage companies developing treatments in areas of high unmet medical need, with the ultimate goal of ensuring access to these potentially curative therapies for all patients. Specifically, it looks for viable, high-quality opportunities in cell and gene therapy, RNA-based therapy, targeted therapies, and the microbiome. The 4BIO team comprises leading advanced therapy scientists and experienced life science investors who have collectively published over 250 scientific articles in prestigious academic journals including *Nature*, *The Lancet*, *Cell*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. 4BIO has both an unrivalled network within the advanced therapy sector and a unique understanding of the criteria that define a successful investment opportunity in this space. For more information, connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/4bio-capital/> and Twitter [@4biocapital](#) and visit [www.4biocapital.com](http://www.4biocapital.com).

#### **About BGF**

BGF was set up in 2011 and has invested over £3.5bn in more than 550 companies, making it the most active growth capital investor in the UK and Ireland. BGF is a minority, non-controlling equity partner with a patient outlook on investments, based on shared long-term goals with the management teams it backs. BGF invests in growing businesses in the UK and Ireland through its network of 15 offices.

Website: <http://www.bgf.co.uk/>

Social media: [@BGFInvestments](#)

#### **About UCB Ventures**

UCB Ventures (UCBV) is an evergreen strategic corporate venture fund established in 2017 to create value from breakthrough innovations that can transform the lives of patients suffering from severe diseases. UCBV makes long-term investments in EU and US-based start-ups developing novel therapeutic modalities and platforms/assets in areas adjacent to or even beyond UCB's current therapeutic focus. Specifically, UCB Ventures is seeking next-generation technology platforms in cell and gene therapy, regenerative medicine, RNA modulation, oligo-based therapeutics and synthetic biology. The UCBV team consists of seasoned investment professionals that work closely with entrepreneurs to bring out to the best in their portfolio companies.

For more information, visit <https://www.ucbventures.com/> and connect on [LinkedIn](#) at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ucb-ventures/>