



Abata Therapeutics Strengthens Board of Directors

Nagesh Mahanthappa Ph.D., M.B.A., and Valerie Odegard, Ph.D., bring significant immunobiology, entrepreneurship, and business development experience to Abata

BOSTON, July 28, 2021—Abata Therapeutics, a company focused on translating the biology of regulatory T cells (Tregs) into transformational medicines for patients living with severe autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, today announced that it has strengthened its board of directors with the addition of Nagesh Mahanthappa Ph.D., M.B.A., and Valerie Odegard, Ph.D.

“Cell therapies have been a significant advancement in treating human disease. However, they have not yet been rigorously evaluated and developed for the treatment of autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, where there remains a tremendous patient need. At Abata we are advancing an entirely new approach by engineering Tregs with targeted activation only at the site of disease, enabling a robust, durable response, while avoiding systemic immune suppression,” said Samantha Singer, M.S., M.B.A., president and chief executive officer of Abata. “Our ambitious goals are only possible if we continue to bring together an industry-leading and diverse team. I’d like to welcome both Valerie and Nagesh to the board, who add deep and highly relevant experience to an already stellar team at Abata.”

“Abata has done incredible work considering the potential of Treg cell therapies in a variety of tissue-specific inflammatory autoimmune diseases, where they can make a true difference in the lives of patients,” said Abbie Celniker, Ph.D., executive chairman of Abata’s board of directors and partner at Third Rock Ventures. “The experience Valerie and Nagesh bring to the board will be invaluable as we move to rapidly advance our lead programs in multiple sclerosis, inclusion body myositis, and Type 1 diabetes into the clinic by 2025, and continue to explore future indications.”

Abata’s [board of directors](#) brings together a group of investors and advisors with deep expertise and commitment to the advancement of novel cell therapies:

- Abbie Celniker, Ph.D.; executive chairman; partner, Third Rock Ventures
- Shelley Chu, M.D., Ph.D.; partner, head of biotech, Lightspeed Venture Partners
- Mitchell H. Finer, Ph.D.; executive partner, MPM Capital; chief scientific officer, ElevateBio; chief executive officer, Life Edit Therapeutics
- Lorence Kim, M.D.; venture partner, Third Rock Ventures
- Nagesh Mahanthappa Ph.D., M.B.A., independent director at Abata Therapeutics, Casma Therapeutics, Exo Therapeutics, and Kojin Therapeutics
- Valerie Odegard, Ph.D., president and chief scientific officer of Silverback Therapeutics
- Samantha Singer, M.S., M.B.A.; chief executive officer, Abata Therapeutics

Valerie Odegard, Ph.D., has an extensive background in the development of immunotherapies and a range of strategic expertise. She is the president and chief scientific officer of Silverback Therapeutics, a clinical-stage biotechnology company developing tissue-targeted therapeutics for the treatment of cancer, chronic viral infections, and other serious diseases. Prior to Silverback, Dr. Odegard served as vice president of research at Juno Therapeutics, where she was responsible for the development of novel cellular immunotherapies. Before her time at Juno, she held research leadership positions at Novo Nordisk and Trubion, where she oversaw the discovery and preclinical development of therapeutics for oncology and inflammatory conditions. Dr. Odegard received her Ph.D. in immunobiology from Yale University.



Nagesh Mahanthappa Ph.D., M.B.A., was most recently the founding employee, president, and CEO of Scholar Rock, Inc. – a Cambridge biotechnology company focused on the discovery and development of a novel class of medicines that modulate signaling by protein growth factors to treat musculoskeletal, fibrotic diseases, and cancer. During his eight-year tenure, Nagesh took the company public and led two distinct drug candidates into clinical testing. Prior to Scholar Rock, he was the founding employee and VP of Corporate Development at Avila Therapeutics, Inc. (acquired by Celgene in early 2012), and was previously a founding employee of Alnylam Pharmaceuticals where he rose to the position of VP, Scientific & Strategic Development. He also served as Manager, Business Development at Vertex Pharmaceuticals, and held a series of positions with increasing scientific and commercial responsibility at Ontogeny (now a part of Curis, Inc.). Dr. Mahanthappa started in the biotechnology industry as a Staff Scientist at Cambridge NeuroScience and was a founder of TwistDx, a DNA diagnostics company acquired by Inverness Medical Innovations (now a part of Abbott Laboratories). Dr. Mahanthappa received his Ph.D. in Neurobiology from the California Institute of Technology and his M.B.A. from the F.W. Olin Graduate School of Management at Babson College.

About Abata Therapeutics

Abata Therapeutics is focused on translating the biology of regulatory T cells (Tregs) into transformational medicines for patients living with severe autoimmune and inflammatory diseases. Founded by pioneers in Treg biology, T cell receptor, and antigen discovery, disease pathogenesis, and molecular and imaging biomarkers, Abata has developed a differentiated product engine to create engineered Treg cell therapies that are tissue-specific, robust, and durable. In addition to its lead program in progressive multiple sclerosis (MS), Abata has programs in Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) and inclusion body myositis (IBM) – two additional tissue-specific autoimmune diseases with substantial unmet need and a strong rationale for Abata’s Treg approach. The company was launched in 2021 by Third Rock Ventures, with participation from a diverse syndicate of investors, including ElevateBio, Lightspeed Venture Partners, Invus, Samsara BioCapital, and the JDRF T1D Fund. Abata is based in Cambridge, Mass. For more information, please visit abatatx.com or follow us on Twitter or LinkedIn.

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