Foundation Helps Establish Not-For-Profit Generic Drug Co.

San Diego’s Gary and Mary West Foundation is helping get off the ground Civica Rx, a new not-for-profit generic drug company with the goal of tackling shortages and high prices of life-saving medications.

The foundation — which funds a number of senior services and initiatives — contributed an initial $1 million to Civica, as well as $9 million in future loans.

The Laura and John Arnold Foundation and the Peterson Center on Healthcare each pledged the same.

Civica Rx said it seeks a stable supply and the affordability of essential generic medicines, many of which are affected by chronic shortages. The initial focus is on 14 hospital-administered generic drugs, but the company didn’t name which ones.

The company, headquartered in Utah, expects its first products to be released as early as next year.

In addition to the three foundations, initial governing members will include the U.S. hospital systems Catholic Health Initiatives, HCA Healthcare, Intermountain Healthcare, Mayo Clinic, Providence St. Joseph Health, SSM Health and Trinity Health.

“The formation of CivicaRx is a direct challenge to generic drug companies who have sharply and unfairly raised prices on many off-patent drugs over the last several years,” said Sheryl Lyford, president and CEO of the Gary and Mary West Foundation. “We all pay a price, and lower-income patients should a particularly heavy burden.”

LIFE SCIENCES

Clearity Marks 10 Years in Ovarian Cancer Fight

Laura Shaiver — perhaps best known as the CEO of Synthorx — launched the Clearity Foundation after her own experience with ovarian cancer. This month marks the 10-year anniversary of the foundation, which has grown in ambition and funding.

Through Clearity, ovarian cancer patients who have recurrent tumors obtain genomic information for deciding on a treatment path, like drugs that may be the most effective. The nonprofit provides tumor blueprints, interpretation, and clinical trial identification free of charge.

This comes after Shaiver more than a decade ago learned first-hand that ovarian cancer treatment hadn’t changed in a long time.

The nonprofit began as a bootstrapped volunteer effort and transformed into a sophisticated operation under the leadership of Executive Director Hillary Theakston.

Clearity received $840,000 in cash donations in 2016, $1.025 million in 2017 and is expected to hit $1.8 million in 2018. (The nonprofit’s fiscal year ends Sept. 30.)

The next decade looks even more promising.

“This data we’ve gathered over time — tumor mutation data, outcomes data, clinical history — all of that helps us to be more knowledgeable and expert about ovarian cancer treatment,” said Theakston.

Gossamer Names Chief Science Officer

San Diego-based startup Gossamer Bio recently lured big-name talent: Laura Salter-Cid, previously vice president and head of immunology at pharmaceutical giant Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Salter-Cid will be Gossamer’s chief scientific officer.

Gossamer is no average biotech. This summer it hauled in a $230 million Series B round, and it’s led by former Receptos executives. But it’s not exactly common to see a top pharmaceutical executive leave for an upstart.

During 13 years at Bristol-Myers Squibb, where she climbed the ladder, Salter-Cid advanced more than 20 compounds into clinical development.

Gossamer, which emerged in January, has three potential treatments in clinical trials and one in the research stage, with more to follow.

“The team and pipeline of innovative and transformative medicines that Gossamer Bio has assembled are truly exciting,” Salter-Cid said in a statement.