



## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **UCL Spin-out Engitix Closes £5m Financing to Progress Liver Disease and Pancreatic Cancer Drug Discovery Platform and Pipeline**

**London, UK – 27 November 2018** – Engitix Ltd, a company pioneering the development of both tissue-specific and disease-specific human extracellular matrix (ECM) for accelerating and improving the drug discovery process, today announces it has closed a £5 million Series A financing, led by a private investor.

Engitix has validated its proprietary tissue-specific and disease-specific human ECM platform in determining drug efficacy in liver fibrosis through successful collaborations with a number of biotech and big pharma companies. With this new investment, the Company is now evolving its business model to in-house drug discovery, to develop a pipeline of candidate drugs targeting liver fibrosis and liver and pancreatic cancers.

Engitix was spun-out of the Institute for Liver and Digestive Health (ILDH), Division of Medicine, University College London (UCL) in 2016 by Dr Giuseppe Mazza, an inventor of decellularization protocols for human liver and other tissues, and Professor Massimo Pinzani, Director of ILDH and a world-renowned expert in the field of liver fibrosis. The Company acquired an exclusive license in 2017 from UCLB, UCL's commercialisation company, to enabling ECM patents and other intellectual property.

The Company's mission is to increase the efficacy and to reduce the cost of later stage drug failure by establishing more advanced platforms for drug target identification and validation in which healthy and diseased cells can be tested with potential therapeutic agents within their natural physiological and pathological microenvironment.

A key current limitation in developing more effective treatments in fibrosis and various solid cancers has been the failure to include human ECM in experimental models, with the majority of compounds failing in late stage clinical trials because of lack of efficacy.

The Company plans to double the size of its R&D team, recruiting at least an additional 10 scientists in London in the fields of drug discovery, bioinformatics and immune oncology, as well as establishing a presence in Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

Giuseppe Mazza, PhD, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, said: *“The traditional drug discovery process in fibrosis and solid tumours relies on artificial in vitro substrates and animal models. So far, these models have been shown to have limitations in providing efficient therapies for patients affected by these devastating diseases. The Engitix platform technology has already shown we can revolutionise our current understanding of human diseases while discovering more realistic targets for future drug development.”*

Steve Arlington, PhD, visiting professor at UCL, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and formerly Lead Global Partner, Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals at PWC and recently appointed Chairman, said: *“Engitix is developing a unique platform with many research applications, which allows the study of human pathophysiology leading to the discovery of novel targets and therapeutics that will benefit patients through the acceleration of drug discovery in liver disease and cancer.”*

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### **About Engitix Ltd**

Engitix was established in 2016 to develop and commercialise research at the UCL Institute for Liver and Digestive Health, Division of Medicine. The Company was founded by Professor Massimo Pinzani and Dr Giuseppe Mazza and has an exclusive license from UCLB to enabling ECM patents and other intellectual property. Engitix is based at the Royal Free Hospital in London, UK.

For more information, please visit [www.engitix.com](http://www.engitix.com)

### **About ECM**

ECM is the non-cellular component present within all tissues and organs which provides not only essential physical scaffolding for the cellular constituents but also regulates crucial biochemical and biomechanical processes required for tissue morphogenesis, differentiation and homeostasis. Loss of regulation of ECM remodelling is associated with pathological conditions such as tissue fibrosis and cancer.

### **About the UCL Institute for Liver and Digestive Health**

The UCL Institute for Liver and Digestive Health (UCL-IL&DH), part of the UCL Division of Medicine, concentrates the entire clinical and scientific activity in Hepatology at UCL (University College London) in close coordination with Hepatobiliary Medicine, Surgery and Liver Transplantation.

UCL-IL&DH is a major education site in the area of Liver and Digestive Medicine and provides training for UCL medical students, specialist registrars, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows from the UK, from other EU Countries and from the rest of the World, including developing Countries.

## About UCLB

UCL Business PLC (UCLB), part of UCL Innovation & Enterprise, is a leading technology commercialisation company that supports research and innovations arising from UCL, one of the UK's top research-led universities. UCLB has a successful track record and a strong reputation for identifying and protecting promising new technologies and innovations from UCL academics. UCLB has a strong track record in commercialising medical technologies and provides technology transfer services to UCL's associated hospitals; University College London Hospitals, Moorfields Eye Hospital, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and the Royal Free London Hospital. It invests directly in development projects to maximise the potential of the research and manages the commercialisation process of technologies from laboratory to market.

[www.uclb.com](http://www.uclb.com)

[www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise)

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