

*Press Release – For Immediate Release*

## **NattoPharma Research Network Receives 4M€ Research Grant Second EU grant will fund substantiating MenaQ7 Vitamin K2 on microcalcification**

**OSLO, NORWAY and METUCHEN, NJ** (March 21, 2017) – NattoPharma’s International Research Network, coordinated by the Cardiovascular Research Institute at Maastricht University (CARIM), has been awarded a second prestigious grant funded by the European Union within the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie research and innovation program. Beneficiary partners of the network are three highly ranked research university departments in Europe (CARIM/MUMC+ Maastricht; Universitätsklinikum Aachen and Karolinska Institutet Stockholm). The 4M€ grant, INTRICARE (International Network for Training on Risks of vascular intimal Calcification And roads to Regression of cardiovascular disease), is coordinated by University of Maastricht CARIM, MUMC+, and will train 15 Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) focusing on vascular smooth muscle cell mediated microcalcification and the effect of vitamin K to hold or regress this process.

“INTRICARE is a European joint doctorate (EJD) program shaped to address the urgent, unmet medical needs concerning vulnerable plaques,” says lead researcher Leon Schurgers at CARIM, Maastricht University, and the main contact between NattoPharma and the University. “It is guided by the academic and industrial demand for a new generation of entrepreneurial scientists, who have the skills, expertise and know-how to expedite our understanding of early atherosclerosis and translation thereof into concrete clinical interventions for prevention and therapy.”

INTRICARE is an interdisciplinary and international consortium involving four leading academic institutions (CARIM/MUMC+ Maastricht; Universitätsklinikum Aachen; Karolinska Institutet Stockholm and King’s College London) and 9 SMEs (small- and medium-sized enterprises), including NattoPharma. The grant will fund 15 ESRs, who will engage in network-wide training events, public engagement activities, and international collaboration through secondments, at industrial or academic partner institutions within the EU. Six ESR’s will be hosted by CARIM, supervised by Leon Schurgers, Tilman Hackeng, Rory Koenen, Eline Kooi, Erik Biessen, and Thomas Unger. The INTRICARE network will be coordinated by Leon Schurgers, Tilman Hackeng, and Thomas Unger.

“Organized around three pillars – initiation of atherogenesis, vascular remodelling associated microcalcification, and imaging of microcalcification and vulnerable plaque formation – the consortium will join forces to address the aforementioned needs through training and research,” Dr. Schurgers continues.

Since 2004, NattoPharma has worked closely with the Maastricht University in documenting benefits of menaquinone-7, the company’s exclusive vitamin K2 branded as MenaQ7®. This grant will provide training in innovative therapeutic strategies that include MenaQ7, identifying selective targets for microvascular calcification, and its consequences for plaque stability, and provide subsequent strategies for prevention or amelioration of vulnerable plaque formation.

“Horizon 2020 grants are the European equivalent to a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant here in the United States,” says NattoPharma Chief Medical Officer Hogne Vik, adding that NattoPharma’s first priority has always been the documentation of MenaQ7’s biological effects on bone and vasculature.” “The assignment of this grant is an honor that further validates the importance of the work we have been doing with Maastricht University, and shines a light on the impact vitamin K2 can have on improving global health. We could not be more thrilled to have a third grant awarded to our partner for further study of MenaQ7.”

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**About MenaQ7<sup>®</sup>**

MenaQ7<sup>®</sup> is the best documented, commercially available vitamin K2 as menaquinone-7 (MK-7) with guaranteed actives and stability, clinical substantiation, and international patents granted and pending. MenaQ7<sup>®</sup> is available in two varieties: MK-7 Crystals and MK-7 PURE. For more information on the health benefits of MenaQ7, visit [menaq7.com](http://menaq7.com).

**About NattoPharma**

NattoPharma ASA, based in Norway, is the world's leader in vitamin K2 research and development. NattoPharma is the exclusive international supplier of MenaQ7<sup>®</sup> Vitamin K2 as MK-7, and has a multi-year research and development program to substantiate and discover the health benefits of vitamin K2 for applications in the marketplace for functional food and dietary supplements. With a global presence, the company established its North American subsidiary, NattoPharma USA, Inc., in Metuchen, NJ. For more information, visit [nattopharma.com](http://nattopharma.com).

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