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Features

Teva to invest $15m in brain research

Teva's investment is within a framework called National Network of Excellence (NNE) in Neuroscience.

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The new management of Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. (NYSE: TEVA; TASE: TEVA), under CEO Dr. Jeremy Levin, is focusing its activity in new drugs on psychiatric diseases and the brain. This is the main field in which the company maintains links with the Israeli pharmaceuticals industry and Israeli academic institutions.

At the same time as it published its strategic plan, in late 2012, the company announced that it was allocating $15 million, over five years, to support interesting technologies in brain research in academic institutions and in start-ups in Israel. This is within a framework called National Network of Excellence (NNE) in Neuroscience.

Monday evening, Teva presented the research projects it has chosen to support this year. It will distribute research grants to veteran researchers, including researchers who examining drugs on the verge of development. Teva will also distribute grants to doctoral and post-doctoral students carrying out conceptually interesting research.

Teva CSO and president of global R&D Dr. Michael Hayden is in charge of the project.

To mark the event, "Globes" is presenting three new breakthrough studies in brain research.

Pain measurement

Dr. Lital Magid is a member of a group which is developing a method which uses MRI imaging to see molecules linked to the pain mechanism. The research is groundbreaking because there is currently no mechanism for objectively measuring the strength, location, and type of pain, which is always assessed on the basis of the patient's reports. Because of this difficulty, it is difficult to obtain, for example, empiric evidence that a specific treatment is "low pain".

"We're studying small molecules which relieve pain naturally in the body. These molecules act on the body's cannabinoid mechanism - the mechanism that cannabis acts on, although these molecules have no similarity to cannabis," says Magid. "We were able to change these molecules, which enables us to see them clearly in an MRI.

"We can see how natural pain relievers are created, where they migrate to, and what breaks them up. Today, there are some pain relief medications in the advanced development state, which act by inhibiting the enzymes that break up these natural pain relievers. Our technology enables us to test the effectiveness of these medications more accurately."

Magid says that monitoring these natural pain relievers in the body, their migration and dispersal could make it possible to distinguish between different kinds of pain, and to target different pain relievers for different kinds of pain.

Dr. Michael Hayden, Dr. Lital Magid, and Dr. Jeremy Levin

Private photograph