



## VERSANTIS – FIGHTING LIVER DISEASES

### Problem – Challenge

Despite the liver playing a central role in a myriad of vital functions, liver disease has been neglected to the point that it is now one of the fastest-growing causes of death (see figure). Every fourth person today is affected by chronic liver disease, many of them undiagnosed. A sick liver can no longer eliminate toxins and wastes the body produces, which triggers a whole cascade of health issues leading to multiple organ failure and Acute-on-Chronic Liver Failure, a severe condition associated with up to 75% mortality within a month. Getting swiftly rid of the toxins will stop that cascade, allow the body time to activate its own healing process, and reverse the fatal course of the acute event.



### Solution

A first patent filed in 2012 protected a dialysis method for the treatment of hyperammonemia and drug intoxication. A liposome composition is injected into the patient's abdomen where it captures and traps the toxins. It can then be removed from the abdomen with the excess toxins. The ETH spin-off Versantis was founded, which pivoted the application from drug intoxication towards liver diseases, identifying this growing market as their most promising entry point for their product. The spin-off stayed in touch with their Alma Mater and licensed three more patents covering the manufacturing of the liposomes, the use of polymersomes in diagnostics and a new urease inhibitor. In 2022 the French company GENFIT acquired Versantis, which at that point had progressed into Phase 2 clinical development with their first drug candidate. The deal included a payment of CHF 40 million, with additional contingent consideration of up to CHF 95 million upon successful clinical and regulatory milestones.

The founders of Versantis:  
Meriam Kabbaj, Vincent Forster and Jean-Christophe Leroux  
(not in the picture) – copyright Hannes Heinzer/ETH Foundation

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(chart by Versantis, data from the British Liver Trust, Impact report, June 2019)

