

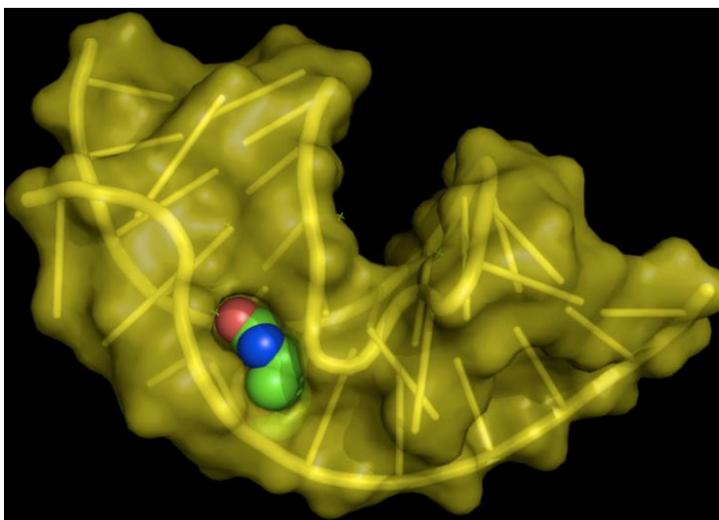


**AptaTargets has closed a €2.7M funding round, allowing the biotech to move into the clinic with its first drug candidate for acute ischemic stroke.**

**AptaTargets**, located in Madrid, is developing new therapeutic applications based on [aptamers](#). The company is currently focussing on a single lead candidate for the treatment of the acute phase of **ischemic stroke**. Now, the biotech was able to raise **€2.7M** in its first funding round, which was backed by one of Spain's biggest VCs [Caixa Capital Risc](#). The new funding will allow the company to push its lead asset, **ApTOLL**, into clinical development.

Aptamers are short, single-stranded **nucleic acids** that adopt defined three-dimensional structures, which enables them to stably bind their targets. Compared to antibodies, these molecules have several advantages, which include higher **reproducibility** and **stability**, lower **immunogenicity** and lower **costs** related to manufacturing.

ApTOLL is an aptamer targeting the **TLR-4**, an innate immune receptor that plays a role in inflammation and is thought to be involved in cellular damage after a stroke. The aim is to block TLR-4 activation within **48h** after an episode of stroke, thereby reducing inflammation and thus brain damage. The company is still completing preclinical studies and aims to move into the clinic in **2018**.



According to the **WHO**, stroke accounts for around **17M** deaths annually and the number is estimated to rise due to an aging population. Consequently, a recent report estimated the global [stroke diagnostics and therapeutics market](#) to reach a massive **\$31B by 2021**.

The standard of care for stroke patients hasn't changed much in the past years, but big biotechs like **Biogen** are eager to corner the promising market. The US company just [entered a deal](#) this week with **Remedy Pharmaceutical's** Phase III stroke asset **Cirara**, an inhibitor of ATP-sensitive potassium channels. This comes in addition to Biogen's Phase II antibody **Natalizumab** that blocks the recruitment of inflammatory cells.

Similar to AptaTarget, French **Acticor Biotech** just [raised €1.5M](#) for its humanized antibody fragment that acts as an anti-clotting agent. Although both biotechs are still at a very early stages, investors seem to be confident enough to back their new treatment strategies.

<http://labiotech.eu/aptatargets-stroke-aptoll-funding/>