J&J to Buy Alios for $1.75B for Two New Hepatitis C Drugs

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Johnson & Johnson (J&J) is expanding its share of the hepatitis C virus (HCV) drug market with a $1.75 billion buyout of the private firm Alios BioPharma, which is showing promise in developing new HCV drugs, Fierce BioTech reports.

The deal, which is expected to close by the end of this year, specifically eyes two of Alios's early stage nucleotide analog drugs, or nucs, called AL-335 and AL-516. These new all-oral hep C meds help stop the infection by blocking the virus's ability to reproduce. Both are expected to go into human trials by 2015.

For J&J, the maker of the HCV drug Olysio (simeprevir), the two new drugs could help propel the company into developing its own fixed-dose cure, without the help of drugs from other companies. Olysio is among the most commonly prescribed HCV meds alongside Gilead's nuc Sovaldi (sofosbuvir).

The acquisition also comes at a pivotal time for hep C drug competition. AbbVie is just a few months away from getting approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on a new three-drug combo of its own. Merck has a new two-drug combo that may be able to provide a cure in just four weeks, and Bristol-Myers Squibb also has a new combination coming through the pipeline.

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