

Sirtris



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

* Sirtris was hoping to develop drugs that could treat diseases of aging, and in so doing had the potential to extend the lifespan of human beings. * The Sirtris team had, in fact, established a link between resveratrol, a compound found in red wine-producing grapes, and sirtuins, a newly discovered family of enzymes with links to improved longevity, metabolism and health in living things as diverse as yeast, mice and humans. Sinclair and Westphal were building Sirtris around the development of sirtuin-activating drugs for the diabetes market.

The Sirtris team had developed its own proprietary formulation of resveratrol, called SRT501, * • In-licensing. One issue was whether to in-license compounds from a biotech company to diversify Sirtris's drug development platform beyond its narrow focus on SIRT1, one of seven sirtuin variants in the human body. Several members of the Sirtris executive team were advocating a more balanced risk portfolio as the company started to increase investment in its drug development efforts. * • Partnership with Pharma. As is almost always the case in biotech, the team was in * discussions about a partnership with a few large pharmaceutical firms.

They were considering * (a) what it would mean for the organization to become tied to a pharmaceutical company at this stage of its development and * (b) whether to postpone a deal until Sirtris had more clinical data. Was this the right point in the company's history to do a deal? * • Nutraceuticals. Sinclair received a near-constant stream of emails and phone calls from the public requesting Sirtris's proprietary version of resveratrol, SRT501. * For some time, he had contemplated selling SRT501 as a nutraceutical, an off-the-shelf health supplement that would not require FDA approval.

This idea raised many questions about market opportunity, commercialization strategies, and the potential impact of a nutraceuticals offering on the Sirtris brand and the all-star group of scientists that had allied themselves with the organization. * In humans, there are seven types of sirtuins in different parts of cells and in different parts of the body. Sirtris was focusing 90% of its R&D on one sirtuin, called SIRT1 in humans.

For simplicity, any reference to sirtuins, unless otherwise noted, is to the family of sirtuins or SIRT1. Sirtris data suggested that it could play a role in managing or even delaying the onset of type-II diabetes. * Nutraceutical, a portmanteau of the words “ nutrition” and “ pharmaceutical”, is a food or food product that reportedly provides health and medical benefits, including the prevention and treatment of disease. * Growing at a compound annual growth rate of 7%. * Wesphal had doubts whether the timing was right for such a venture, and whether the firm should even market a nutraceutical under its corporate brand. * Nutraceuticals market was unpredictable.