

# Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and InSphero Partner to Advance Drug Discovery for Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis

*InSphero, leader in enabling pharma researchers to use predictive, human 3D cell-based disease models expands its NASH portfolio in collaboration with VUB*

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[Vrije Universiteit Brussel](#) (VUB) and [InSphero AG](#), a leading provider of 3D *in vitro* liver disease models, have announced a licensing agreement for the development and commercialization of an *in vitro* model for Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH).

The collaboration combines VUB's outstanding expertise in liver biology and NASH research with InSphero's market-leading, scalable 3D cell culture technology for drug discovery. The result is a state-of-the-art *in vitro* model that will accelerate drug discovery for NASH, a rapidly growing global health issue. The model is the only scalable, automation-compatible solution on the market, which covers for full development process from screening for new molecules against NASH to mechanistic investigation of screening hits.

"NASH is a complex disease that requires more efficient and effective methods for drug discovery," said [Professor Leo van Grunsven](#), Head of the VUB Liver Cell Biology Research Laboratory. "Our partnership with InSphero will allow researchers globally to leverage our latest *in vitro* technology and to identify new therapeutic targets and advance the development of effective treatments."

"We are thrilled to partner with VUB to address this growing health concern," said [Jan Lichtenberg, PhD](#), CEO and Co-Founder of InSphero AG. "This licensing agreement allows us to bring cutting-edge research by Leo van Grunsven's team to market and to combine it with our robust Akura™ 96 and 384 platforms.". The translation of VUB's *in vitro* NASH model into the automated screening platform of InSphero is the key step to create an efficient and human-focused discovery technology for industry and academic researchers aiming at addressing the growing NASH pandemic.

Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis is an inflammation of the liver initiated by fat accumulation in the organ. As the disease progresses, the liver function becomes increasingly impaired while scarring of the liver leads to cirrhosis and the potential need for a transplantation.

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## **About VUB**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) is a leading research-intensive university located in the heart of Europe. VUB's Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy is dedicated to improving human health through innovative research and education. The Liver Cell Biology Research Group embedded in this faculty, aims to better characterize the different liver cell types in healthy and pathological conditions, develop better in vitro models to study (chronic) liver diseases and to gain better insight into the mechanisms that drive liver regeneration and pathogenesis.

## **About InSphero**

InSphero is the pioneer of industrial-grade, 3D-cell-based assay solutions and scaffold-free 3D organ-on-a-chip technology. InSphero's technology platform empowers pharmaceutical and biotechnology researchers to successful and predictive decision-making by accurately rebuilding the human physiology in vitro. Its robust and precisely engineered suite of 3D InSight™ human tissue platforms are used by major pharmaceutical companies worldwide to increase efficiency in drug discovery and safety testing. The company specializes in liver toxicology, metabolic diseases (e.g., T1 & T2 diabetes and NAFLD & NASH liver disease), and oncology (with a focus on immuno-oncology and PDX models). The scalable Akura™ technology underlying the company's 3D InSight™ Discovery and Safety Platforms includes 96 and 384-well plate formats and the Akura™ Flow organ-on-a-chip system to drive efficient innovation throughout all phases of drug development.

Learn more at [insphero.com](https://insphero.com). Follow the company on [LinkedIn](#) and sign up for the [Scientific Newsletter](#).

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## **Images:**

