

Breakthrough:

*Maria Maccicchini,
CEO of QR Pharma, will
present the latest data on
Alzheimer's research.*



Matters of the Mind:
Maria Maccicchini unveils
the latest on her company's
new Alzheimer's drug. Page 40.



Tuesday, May 11 Is Alzheimer's Disease Close To Being Cured?

As much as we know about the human brain, we still do not fully understand Alzheimer's disease. We understand that it is a deterioration of the brain cells, we understand that it is fatal, and we understand that there is no cure.

A century after this most common form of dementia got its moniker, Alzheimer's affects more than 5 million patients and costs more than \$100 billion a year to fight.

But there is hope. According to the FDA, recently completed studies of posiphen, a new drug developed by QR Pharma of Radnor, Pennsylvania, show evidence of that the drug might halt and possibly reverse the course of the disease. The FDA approved the drug in February, and posiphen already is showing signs of slowing Alzheimer's and Downs syndrome.

Maria Maccicchini, founder and CEO of QR Pharma, will discuss the latest findings on posiphen and recent research into brain ailments at the Princeton Senior Resource Center on Tuesday, May 11, at 10 a.m. at PSRC headquarters, 45 Stockton Street, Princeton. The event is free, or \$10 for the program and lunch.

The Switzerland-born Maccicchini is a longtime biotech entrepreneur who earned her bachelor's in math and chemistry from the University of Bern in the 1970s, followed by a master's in biochemistry, University of Basel, Switzerland, and her Ph.D. in biochemistry from Rockefeller University.

She started as a research scientist at Missouri-based pharma developer Mallinckrodt. In the early 1990s Maccicchini founded Symphony Pharmaceuticals. The company later became known as Annovis, which was acquired by Transgenomic in 2001. After selling Annovis, Maccicchini joined Robin Hood Ventures and Mid-Atlantic Angel Group, a pair of angel investment groups for biotech. She served on the boards of several biotech, business groups, and charities while investing in mid-stage companies and mentoring early-stage biotech in start-up, strategy, management, and finance issues.

In 2008 Maccicchini started QR Pharma, which develops therapeutics for Alzheimer's disease and other brain-deteriorating ailments. According to an article in the Philadelphia Business Journal that May, Maccicchini "wanted to run a life science company again, rather than tell other people how to do it."

QR developed three drugs for Alzheimer's, the first of which (phenserine) failed in Phase III clinical trials. The second, posiphen, is showing more tantalizing results in Phase I. According to the published results of the trials, posiphen showed enough promise to earn QR a \$500,000 investment from Ben Franklin Technology Partners last April. The drug is showing positive results as well for Parkinson's disease, a progressive disorder that attacks the central nervous and muscular systems.

In a 2009 report by the Chemical Heritage Foundation, an industry trade group based in Darby, Pennsylvania, Maccicchini stated that the failures of phenserine have taught her well. Maccicchini is not a stranger to failing on first tries. In 2002 she set out to become the oldest woman to summit Mt. Everest, but she gave up 4,000 feet from the peak, according to the Philadelphia Business Journal.

"There is this nagging thing in the back of my mind saying I hope I am not stupid enough to try it again," she told that paper. "What I learned is most people do it twice and, interestingly enough, most people fail the first time.

• *Scott Morgan*

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