

Critical Path Institute's Translational Therapeutics Accelerator Awards Grant to Support Development of Novel Nonopioid Pain Therapeutics

TUCSON, Ariz., March 3, 2026 — Critical Path Institute's® (C-Path) Bridging Research and Innovation in Drug Development Grants (BRIDGe) program, offered through its Translational Therapeutics Accelerator, announced today the award of a one-year grant to Corey Hopkins, Ph.D., at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). The \$242,781 grant will support Hopkins' cutting-edge project, "Development of Novel Compounds as Nonopioid Pain Therapeutics."

Chronic pain affects millions worldwide and is often poorly managed. Common treatments, especially opioids, carry serious risks such as addiction, constipation, cognitive and motor impairment, and potentially fatal respiratory depression, underscoring the urgent need for safer, nonopioid therapies.

Dr. Hopkins' research targets neuropathic pain and chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, areas of high unmet need where current treatments are often ineffective or poorly tolerated. The work focuses on the sigma-1 receptor, positioning sigma-1 receptor antagonists as a promising next-generation pain therapy.



Jerri Rook, Ph.D.

The project is a collaborative effort with Jerri Rook, Ph.D., of the Vanderbilt Center for Neuroscience Discovery, who brings expertise in preclinical pain models and translational pharmacology. Together, the team will employ a medicinal chemistry-driven approach combined with an acute inflammatory pain model to establish a pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic (PK/PD) relationship. This PK/PD model will guide compound optimization and support progression of lead candidates with improved translational potential.



Corey Hopkins, Ph.D.

"This project is deeply important to me and the entire research team," said Hopkins. "Neuropathic pain and chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy continue to leave far too many patients without effective or tolerable treatment options. We are passionate about advancing nonopioid strategies that can make a meaningful difference in patients' lives, and we are extremely grateful to C-Path for their support of this important work."

Maaïke Everts, Ph.D., Executive Director of C-Path's Translational Therapeutics Accelerator, emphasized the broader significance of the project. "This research exemplifies the type of translational science the BRIDGe program was designed to support," said Dr. Everts. "By combining innovative chemistry with rigorous PK/PD modeling, Drs. Hopkins and Rook are addressing a critical gap in pain management and advancing nonopioid therapeutic strategies that could ultimately benefit patients with significant unmet medical needs."

To learn more about C-Path's Translational Therapeutics Accelerator and BRIDGE awards, visit <https://c-path.org/trxa>.

About Critical Path Institute

Critical Path Institute (C-Path) is an independent, nonprofit established in 2005 as a public-private partnership, in response to the FDA's Critical Path Initiative. C-Path's mission is to lead collaborations that advance better treatments for people worldwide. Globally recognized as a pioneer in accelerating drug development, C-Path has established numerous international consortia, programs and initiatives that currently include more than 1,600 scientists and representatives from government and regulatory agencies, academia, patient organizations, disease foundations and pharmaceutical and biotech companies. With dedicated team members located throughout the world, C-Path's global headquarters is located in Tucson, Arizona and C-Path's Europe subsidiary is headquartered in Amsterdam, Netherlands. For more information, visit c-path.org.