



MEMORANDUM

Novo Nordisk establishes new obesity research unit - October 1, 2014

Late last week, Novo Nordisk announced the establishment of a new obesity research center in Seattle, WA, following [remarks](#) from Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Mads Thomsen during EASD regarding the company's plans to commence a large-scale effort in this area. The Novo Nordisk Obesity Research Unit, to be co-located with the company's existing type 1 diabetes research unit in Seattle, will be led by Oregon Health & Science University endocrinologist and senior scientist Dr. Kevin Grove. Much of Dr. Grove's [recent work](#) has focused on preclinical models and mechanistic studies, which positions him well to lead the early exploratory research that will get the center going. The Seattle obesity unit will initially employ approximately ten people, and is expected to be fully operational with a staff of around 60 by the end of 2016. Of course, Novo Nordisk's already has a presence in obesity: a 3.0 mg dose of the company's GLP-1 agonist liraglutide (proposed brand name: Saxenda) received a 14-to-1 vote in favor of approval at a recent [FDA Advisory Committee](#) meeting (at which our own Ms. Kelly Close delivered a passionate presentation on the vast unmet need in prediabetes and obesity - see her [slides](#) and our [coverage](#) of her talk for more detail). The company now appears to be interested in creating a broader portfolio of agents to more directly tackle the underlying mechanisms of obesity; possible targets include PYY and amylin as well as GLP-1. We expect Novo Nordisk's expanded presence in obesity will bring topics such as diabetes prevention to greater prominence - after all, liraglutide 3.0 mg more than doubled the reversion rate to normoglycemia among patients with obesity and prediabetes in the [SCALE Obesity and Prediabetes](#) study.