



## CommonSpirit Health and Zharko Pharma Team to Solve Serious Medical Concern: Hot Flashes during Menopause

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CommonSpirit Health and pharmaceutical startup Zharko Pharma, Inc. are partnering to explore new ways to treat hot flashes during menopause. Their work will focus on adapting non-hormonal compounds, called TRPV1 antagonists, which were previously developed and clinically tested as alternatives to opioids for treating pain. Although these compounds ultimately proved to be ineffective at lessening pain and were abandoned for this purpose, initial observations suggest they may help women manage the discomfort of hot flashes. The process for assessing their effectiveness with hot flashes should be considerably faster and less costly, as several TRPV1 antagonists have already been found to be safe in human clinical trials. With CommonSpirit's support, Zharko has secured the exclusive worldwide license for this technology.

Hot flashes constitute a serious medical concern. For menopausal women, this symptom is the number one reason why they see a doctor, according to numerous studies. Recent studies also suggest that hot flashes during menopause contribute to women leaving the workforce, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic. For most women, the symptoms of menopause begin between the ages of 45 and 55, and many women experience hot flashes for the rest of their lives. According to OECD data, menopausal women represent 11 percent of the workforce in the seven most industrialized countries. And a U.K. study conducted by international health insurance firm BUPA found that three in five menopausal women were negatively affected at work.

"By investing in Zharko, CommonSpirit is helping a small company do something big," said Andrej Romanovsky, MD, PhD, who was a professor at CommonSpirit's St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, before launching and leading Zharko. "Together, we're finding a new way to treat hot flashes."

"Signing a license agreement between Zharko Pharma and CommonSpirit Health was the first step," continued Dr. Romanovsky. "The next step for Zharko is to obtain access to one of the TRPV1 antagonists that have been already tested by pharmaceutical companies and –for one reason or another –abandoned. There are several pharmaceutical companies

that have such abandoned compounds sitting on their shelves, so to speak, and Zharko has started exploratory work with several of them. After Zharko has access to one or several TRPV1 antagonists, it will initiate a clinical trial.”

CommonSpirit work with Zharko is led by its Strategic Innovation team’s Intellectual Property function.

“The IP function is dedicated to evaluating, protecting and commercializing the creativity and ingenuity of CommonSpirit’s employees and stakeholders. If successful, this IP related to a novel method to treat hot flashes has the potential to help mitigate an unpleasant side effect faced by millions of menopausal women, and we are very excited to work with an entrepreneurial company like Zharko on this important project,” said, Manoja Ratnayake Lecamwasam PhD, MBA, System Vice President, Intellectual Property and Life Sciences/Device Innovation at CommonSpirit Health.

Due to the use of the accelerated drug development model (repurposing of previously developed compounds) Zharko hopes to enter the clinical-trial stage very soon, perhaps as early as two years.

### **About Zharko**

Zharko Pharma is a pharmaceutical startup that develops a novel, non-hormonal treatment for hot flashes. The company was founded in August of 2019 by Andrej Romanovsky, a Russian-born physiologist and neuroscientist with extensive expertise in body temperature regulation. The company’s name is a transliteration of the Russian adverb жарко (žárko), which means hot, like in feeling uncomfortably hot. While other pharmaceutical companies target the blushing itself, Zharko Pharma targets the deleterious feeling of heat discomfort.

### **About CommonSpirit Health**

CommonSpirit Health is a nonprofit, Catholic health system dedicated to advancing health for all people. It was created in February 2019 by Catholic Health Initiatives and Dignity Health. CommonSpirit is committed to creating healthier communities, delivering exceptional patient care, and ensuring every person has access to quality health care. With its national office in Chicago and a team of approximately 150,000 employees and 25,000 physicians and advanced practice clinicians, CommonSpirit Health operates 140 hospitals and more than 1,000 care sites across 21 states. Learn more at [commonspirit.org](http://commonspirit.org).