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Ultragenyx Appoints Lars Ekman, M.D., Ph.D., to Board of Directors

NOVATO, Calif., March 21, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Ultragenyx Pharmaceutical Inc. (NASDAQ:RARE), a biopharmaceutical company focused on the development of novel products for rare and ultra-rare diseases, today announced the appointment of Lars Ekman, M.D., Ph.D., to the company's Board of Directors effective March 17, 2016. Dr. Ekman, Executive Partner at Sofinnova Ventures, will serve as an independent director to Ultragenyx.

"Throughout his distinguished career, Lars has established a strong record of developing and bringing new therapies to patients around the world," said Emil D. Kakkis, M.D., Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of Ultragenyx. "His expertise will be extremely valuable to Ultragenyx as we advance our clinical pipeline toward commercialization and as we build our earlier stage pipeline programs."

"Ultragenyx has made tremendous progress toward bringing unique medicines to patients with rare diseases," said Dr. Ekman. "I am excited to join Ultragenyx at this pivotal time, and I look forward to working with the Board and the team to deliver on this vision."

Dr. Ekman has more than 30 years of experience in senior executive, scientific, and clinical functions. Since 2008, he has served as executive partner at Sofinnova Ventures, a leading venture capital firm in biotechnology. Dr. Ekman previously served as president of research and development at Elan. He is credited with advancing the company's pipeline during this period, and under his leadership, Elan received approval for four U.S. New Drug Applications, three European Marketing Authorization Applications and five Investigational New Drug Applications. Prior to joining Elan, Dr. Ekman led research and development at Schwarz Pharma AG, and prior to that, held a variety of senior scientific and clinical roles at Pharmacia (now Pfizer).

Dr. Ekman serves as Chairman of Amarin Corporation plc, Sophiris Bio, Inc., and Prothena Corporation plc, and is a director of Spark Therapeutics, Inc.

Dr. Ekman is a board-certified surgeon with a Ph.D. in Experimental Biology and has held several clinical and academic positions in both the United States and Europe. He obtained his Ph.D. and M.D. from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

About Ultragenyx

Ultragenyx is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company committed to bringing to market novel products for the treatment of rare and ultra-rare diseases, with a focus on serious, debilitating genetic diseases. Founded in 2010, the company has rapidly built a diverse portfolio of product candidates with the potential to address diseases for which the unmet medical need is high, the biology for treatment is clear, and for which there are no approved therapies.

The company is led by a management team experienced in the development and commercialization of rare disease therapeutics. Ultragenyx's strategy is predicated upon time and cost-efficient drug development, with the goal of delivering safe and effective therapies to patients with the utmost urgency.

For more information on Ultragenyx, please visit the company's website at www.ultragenyx.com.

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