

A Seven-Year Adventure in Peptide Drug Discovery!

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Heads, Structural Biology & Peptide Chemistry

MAESTRO
THERAPEUTICS

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| Abstract

Peptide drug hunting is both fascinating and challenging! Maestro Therapeutics has evolved as a unique enterprise of R&D consulting, business advising, and mentoring over the past seven years. This PDHC Spotlight highlights the sustained impact of Maestro Therapeutics on peptide drug discovery through a significant number of biotech collaborations to advance proof-of-concept studies and drug development candidates. Beyond R&D focus, Maestro Therapeutics has supported many of its biotech portfolio in various business development goals, including realizing internal ambitions, interfacing with potential investors, connecting with prospective pharma partners, and overseeing work as liaison with service providers.

| Maestro Therapeutics R&D Collaborations

Since 2019, Maestro Therapeutics has worked with >40 biotechs (spinouts, early-to-late-stage, and public), venture firms, and pharma. From its inception, the focus of its efforts has been to support R&D objectives, especially preclinical peptide lead optimization and providing strong collaborative know-how throughout the drug discovery process. This has included peptide design (linear and macrocyclic modalities and conjugates thereof) and lead optimization to development candidates, structural biology, computational modeling, peptide chemistry, and translation of *in vitro* SAR data to *in vivo* efficacy, pharmacokinetic, safety, and drug delivery models. Several thousand peptide analogs have been advanced via Maestro Therapeutics' collaboration with several key biotechs.

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Maestro Therapeutics Funding & Partnering Liaison

Tomi's prior experience in biotech and pharma provides valuable insight and understanding of the cost of drug discovery especially for start-up and early-stage companies as well as effective ways to gain funding from venture capital firms and pharma (R&D, BD&L and/or venture groups). As a key opinion leader, he has influenced and promoted >\$500M in biotech funding via venture capital, pharma, and IPOs to support peptide drug discovery. Furthermore, Tomi's previous work contributed, in part, to >\$2B market cap growth (Ariad Pharma), a \$1.1B biotech-pharma strategic alliance (Aileron Therapeutics and Roche), and establishing the first pharma-based integrated Peptide Drug Hunter Network (Merck). In this spirit, Maestro Therapeutics has been building a deep interfacing network with many pharma, venture capital, contract R&D organizations, and service providers to support biotechs in terms of corporate business goals, including funding and partnering.

Maestro Therapeutics Multidisciplinary Expertise

7 YEARS AGO

Maestro Therapeutics was founded by Tomi Sawyer (1981 Ph.D., University of Arizona). Tomi did his graduate studies with Professor Victor Hruby, a legendary peptide chemist. He has surpassed four decades of driving drug discovery within several pharma and biotech companies as well as via Maestro Therapeutics (since 2019). Tomi's scientific and leadership experience includes Senior Vice President, Drug Discovery (Ariad Pharma [now Takeda]), Chief Scientific Officer (Aileron Therapeutics [now Rein Therapeutics]) and Distinguished Scientist (Merck). He is credited with >660 publications, patents and presentations.

4 YEARS AGO

Thomas Sawyer (2022 Ph.D., Molecular and Cellular Biology, University of Massachusetts) and Jonathon Sawyer (2022 Ph.D., Biochemistry, University of Arizona) were recruited to join and evolve Maestro Therapeutics. Beyond their respective graduate studies, Thomas and Jonathon did several internships with biotechs, and these experiences further ignited their entrepreneurial spirit to take on a non-conventional career path to bolster Maestro Therapeutics' support of peptide drug discovery R&D efforts.

The collective scientific expertise of the Maestro Therapeutics team exceeds six decades of multidisciplinary working knowledge on diverse peptide modalities, therapeutic targets, drug design and structural modeling applications, peptide chemistry and biology strategies, peptide pharmacokinetic, and drug delivery approaches. Although our ongoing R&D work with biotechs remains confidential, we have engaged in significant peptide drug discovery efforts to drive lead optimization on key therapeutics targets, including both extracellular receptors and intracellular targets. Typically, this has involved having co-structures (X-ray and/or cryo-EM) and the use of sophisticated computational modeling methods.

We seek robust collaborations with our biotech partners with regular project meetings, transparent idea and data sharing, real-time tracking of peptide chemistry and SAR, and driving lead optimization to *in vivo* proof-of-concept and promising development candidates. We have achieved success with several of our biotechs in terms of progressing peptide leads into late preclinical development.

Before Maestro Therapeutics, Tomi's track record for drug discovery includes peptide (linear and macrocyclic), small molecule, and natural product modalities. Some specific examples are ALRN-6924/Sulanemadlin (dual MDM2/MDMX antagonist), Iclusig® (Gleevec-resistant Bcr-Abl kinase inhibitor), Ridaforolimus (mTor inhibitor), AP23464 (Src kinase inhibitor), AP22408 (Src SH2 antagonist), U-81749 (HIV-1 protease inhibitor), Ditekiren (renin inhibitor), NDP-MSH/Scenesse® (MC1R superagonist), and cyclo[Cys^{4,10}]-MSH (MC1R superagonist).

Tour de Force for Good Medicines

Maestro Therapeutics is seeking to expand its future scientific and business *modus operandi* to include other entrepreneurs in peptide drug discovery. This will fortify its capabilities to meet the ever-changing needs of R&D consulting, business advising, and scientific scholarship. We have dubbed this endeavor our "Tour de Force for Good Medicines" and we look forward to engaging individuals in the future who may wish to share their expertise and talents with Maestro Therapeutics!

Professional & Entrepreneurial Mentoring

Professional and entrepreneurial mentorship has been a long-lasting prerogative of Tomi, and such has included >100 individuals (e.g., undergraduates, graduates, post-docs, scientists, directors, vice presidents, and C-level officers) across the academic, biotech, and pharma spectrum. Lastly, with similar inspiration for training, teaching, and transforming R&D teams, Maestro Therapeutics has been a founding partner and Magnum Sponsor for the Peptide Drug Hunting Consortium to support its vision and mission for entrepreneurial science and innovative technology enabling future peptide medicines.

Scientific Scholarship & Intellectual Property

Summarized here are several invited talks at key symposia/conferences and biotech/pharma seminars as well as published perspectives, reviews, articles, and patent filings credited to Maestro Therapeutics and its collaborators since 2019:

9 LECTURES

- Victor J. Hruby Symposium (2026)
- TIDES USA conferences (2026, 2020)
- Hanson Wade Summits (2026, 2024)
- CHI conferences (2021, 2020, 2020)
- Expert panels (CHI conference 2025; Hanson Wade Summit 2025).

17 SEMINARS

- Abbvie
- Abiologics
- Bicycle Therapeutics
- Biohaven Pharma
- Entrada Therapeutics
- EpiAxis Therapeutics
- Exeliris
- 48Hour Discovery
- Genentech
- GlaxoSmithKline
- J&J Innovative Medicine
- Ormoni Bio
- Pepticom
- Perpetual Medicines
- SyntheX
- Vivtex

12 PATENTS

- Courage Therapeutics
- Centessa Pharma
- Resolute Bio
- Merck
- Other biotechs (undisclosed)



14 PERSPECTIVES, REVIEWS, ARTICLES

- Nature Communications
- Journal of Clinical Investigation
- Journal of Medicinal Chemistry
- Journal of the American Chemical Society
- ACS Chemical Biology
- ACS Medicinal Chemistry Letters
- Chemical Science
- Molecules
- Pharmaceutical Research
- Journal of Controlled Release
- International Journal of Toxicology

6 BOOK CHAPTERS

- ACS Symposium Series on *Approaching the Next Inflection in Peptide Therapeutics Attaining Cell Permeability*
- Royal Society Drug Discovery Series on *Peptide Therapeutics: Strategy and Tactics for Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls*
- Wiley & Sons' *Contemporary Accounts in Drug Discovery & Development*

Testimonials

The following biotechs were invited to share comments on their perspective of working with Maestro Therapeutics regarding impacts to their R&D pipeline, drug discovery platforms, and/or supporting their corporate business goals:



Aqur Biosciences

As Aqur Biosciences advances the development of our novel oral peptide-based cholesterol therapy, Tomi and the Maestro Therapeutics team have become invaluable scientific and strategic partners. Their exceptional expertise in peptide drug discovery, structural biology, computational modeling, medicinal chemistry, and translational development has significantly strengthened our R&D strategy and accelerated our program. Under Tomi's leadership, together with the outstanding contributions of Thomas and Jonathon, they have built and now lead the R&D team at Aqur Biosciences. Their commitment, scientific excellence, creativity, and collaborative approach have been instrumental as we work to accelerate our development program. We look forward to continuing this exciting journey together. – Michael Fole, CEO

BioAge Labs

Working with Tomi and the Maestro Therapeutics team has been a genuine pleasure and a big help to BioAge. Their deep expertise in peptide design, chemistry, computational modeling, and lead optimization has meaningfully strengthened our discovery efforts, while their engagement with external partners has provided valuable support for both our science and business objectives. We are grateful for the partnership and look forward to continued collaboration. – Kristen Fortney, CEO

Courage Therapeutics

Tomi is a recognized world-class peptide chemist known for his creativity and productive thought processes. As a leading chemist in the melanocortin peptide field, having designed both NDP-MSH and the first cyclic melanocortin peptides, we deliberately sought him out to embark on our mission together. Tomi's expertise has been invaluable for the development of best-in-class MC4R agonists at Courage Therapeutics. We also value having Thomas and Jonathon contributing their know-how in support of Tomi's chemistry leadership to advance our R&D efforts. – Giovanni Ferrara, CEO

Entrada Therapeutics

From Entrada's inception, the team at Maestro Therapeutics has been an integral part in our journey to push forward the boundaries of peptide therapeutics. Tomi is an institution in the peptide field and an exceptional thought partner, possessing an endless reservoir of knowledge paired with an uncanny ability to ask the right questions at the right time driving us to find solutions to advance our programs. Jonathon brings unbridled scientific curiosity and insight to the process, and Entrada benefited from his work both scientifically and operationally to compile and disseminate literature from across the peptide landscape. Their work, both at Maestro and at PDHC, has provided Entrada with a wealth of connections to a community of researchers advancing our field and is one we continue to benefit from every day. – Natarajan Sethuraman, CSO

EpiAxis Therapeutics

Maestro Therapeutics has been instrumental in supporting EpiAxis' strategic and scientific progress over a period of significant change. The deep, multidisciplinary experience that Tomi and the Maestro team have contributed to our discovery efforts have created significant value for our company. Maestro's dedication to bringing forth the transformative medicines of tomorrow through advancing the forefront of peptide science is genuinely inspiring. – Ben Buckley, CEO

48Hour Discovery

For several years, we have worked very closely with several members of the team at Maestro and we couldn't be happier with the results. The expertise that the Maestro Therapeutics Team has brought to 48Hour Discovery includes everything from tactical fixes to strategic direction. We consider that the support we've received from Tomi and his team has positively reset the trajectory for 48Hour Discovery over the past three years. – Rick Finnegan, *CEO*

Ladder Bio

Tomi has been a trusted scientific advisor and consultant to Ladder Bio for many years, bringing deep peptide drug discovery expertise, practical pharmaceutical development experience, and creative scientific insight. He recognized early the unique potential and differentiated capabilities to design and build Spiroligomers (ladder-shaped, peptide-like structures), and his guidance has helped us sharpen the platform, prioritize its most differentiated targets, and advance this new modular chemistry toward meaningful medicines. In addition to the technical expertise, Tomi is a great person, always responsive, and a pleasure to work with. – Eric Heil, *CEO*

Onca Bio

Whenever we have a question about peptide development—chemistries, targets, regulatory, assays, informatics, and everything in between—we know we can count on Tomi and the Maestro Therapeutics team. They not only provide us the right information but also the broader context: the people, companies, and programs that ultimately make new drugs. This has been invaluable for us in the early days at Onca Bio. Lastly, I'm grateful for the education, the ideas, the connections, and just the conversation with Tomi. Congratulations on seven years of helping grow the peptide field! – Tyler Stukenbroeker, *Co-Founder & CEO*

Pepticom

For Pepticom the work with Tomi and the Maestro Therapeutics team is a great source of knowledge, knowhow, and an outstanding perspective of the peptide drug field that enabled the streamlining of our platform as well as the creation of valuable business collaborations. – Immanuel Lerner, *CEO*

Receptor.AI

Maestro Therapeutics has been a valuable scientific and strategic partner to Receptor.AI. Tomi has brought deep expertise in peptide drug discovery, practical insight into translational development, and thoughtful guidance on how to position and advance collaborative programs. His support has helped us strengthen both the scientific framing of our peptide platform and our engagement with potential partners. – Alan Navfiev, *CEO*

Vivtex

Over the past three years, Tomi has been an invaluable scientific advisor to Vivtex. Across a remarkably wide range of topics – from deep scientific questions to business development and corporate strategy – he has consistently provided insightful, thoughtful, and highly valuable guidance that reflects both his profound expertise and his distinguished, longstanding career in the biotech and pharmaceutical industry. Beyond his technical acumen, Tomi is an outstanding communicator and a true pleasure to work with. We are grateful for his continued partnership and look forward to working with him for years to come. – Thomas Von Erlach, *CEO*

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