



DIVE BRIEF // Emerging biotech

Laronde, Senda Biosciences merge to create new Flagship company

Sail Biomedicines will combine Laronde's work on "endless RNA" with Senda's research on programmable nanoparticles.

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Reporter

*Guillaume Pfefer of Flagship Pioneering will be the CEO of Sail Biomedicines.
Permission granted by Senda Biosciences*

Dive Brief:

- Flagship Pioneering-launched startups Laronde and Senda Biosciences are merging to form a new biotechnology company called Sail Biomedicines, the companies announced Thursday.
- The new company said it will work with so-called "endless RNA," programmable nanoparticles and artificial intelligence tools to build a new class of medicines.
- Sail will be led by Guillaume Pfefer, a veteran of GSK and Sanofi who was most recently CEO of Senda. John Mendlein, a former executive at Moderna, will serve as the company's executive chairman.

Dive Insight:

Sail's launch ends a difficult period for Laronde, a buzzy Flagship startup that brought in nearly \$500 million to fund development of

endless RNA-based medicines.

Laronde drew investor interest for its work creating synthetic, circular versions of the nucleic acid that could carry protein blueprints into cells. While linear strands of RNA often don't last long, the round shape of eRNA in theory could prevent cellular enzymes from degrading the blueprints, leading to longer protein expression.

Despite the technology's promise, Laronde was roiled by leadership changes and problems with replicating key preclinical data, leading it to shelve two programs and dozens of employees to quit, Stat reported in June.

"There was a past chapter where admittedly, there were some challenges," Mendlein said. "But that chapter closed quite some time ago, and we've written a completely new chapter for Laronde that builds on a lot of scientific foundation that was established earlier."

Its merger with Senda, which launched three years ago and raised \$266 million in private financing before the merger, creates a biotech that can draw on two Flagship platforms.

While both companies had previously communicated plans to move into the clinic, Sail is looking a bit further out. "We have many opportunities to move in[to] humans within the next two years, as a combined organization as Sail," Pfefer said.

The company did not say whether it would retain all employees of Laronde and Senda through the merger.