



## DIVE BRIEF

# Gilead allies with targeted drug startup Tentarix in latest research bet

As part of the deal, Gilead will hold options to acquire up to three Tentarix subsidiaries built around drug programs the companies discover and develop.

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*Gilead will pay \$66 million in upfront cash and equity investment in Tentarix under the deal announced Tuesday. Permission granted by Gilead Sciences*

**Dive Brief:**

- Gilead is adding another early-stage biotechnology company to its rolodex of partners, announcing Tuesday a multipart research alliance with the San Diego-based Tentarix Biotherapeutics.
- The deal involves three separate multiyear collaborations between the companies to discover and develop biologic therapies for cancer and inflammatory diseases using Tentarix's drugmaking technology. Gilead will also hold options to acquire up to three Tentarix subsidiaries built around each of the collaborations.
- Gilead is paying \$66 million in upfront cash and an equity investment in Tentarix, and has agreed to pay an additional \$80 million for each acquisition option it exercises. Gilead expects

the deal to result in a small impact to its earnings-per-share figures this year.

**Dive Insight:**

Launched just under two years ago, Tentarix specializes in designing biologic drugs that activate only in specific cellular conditions — an attribute it claims could allow it to more selectively target immune cells involved in disease, while avoiding others.

For instance, the company's lead program targets two forms of a protein receptor called IL2, as well as surface proteins found on certain T cells. The therapy is meant to work only when all targets are bound at the same time, in theory limiting its action only to those cells.

The approach overlaps in some respects with research on drugs known as bispecific antibodies, which are meant to bring two different types of cells together. Tentarix claims its drugs will be able to engage more than two targets at a time, and work in a broader array of cellular settings.

The company raised \$50 million in funding from Versant Ventures and Samsara Biocapital in October 2021, and has now drawn Gilead's attention.

In a statement, Flavius Martin, Gilead's head of research, described the deal as "highly synergistic" to his company's efforts in targeting immune dysregulation within cancer and inflammatory diseases.

The deal follows about three months after Gilead acquired another San Diego-based startup, XinThera, for its early-stage cancer and immune drugs. The company has been an active dealmaker in both fields over the past several years, striking modest-sized alliances

with companies like Arcus Biosciences, Forty Seven and MiroBio as well as spending \$21 billion to acquire Immunomedics. Not all have panned out as planned, however.

Under deal terms, Tentarix has several opportunities to secure further payment from Gilead, should the larger biotech opt to acquire one of the program-specific subsidiaries. The company's structure shares some similarities with those used successfully by Teneobio, IFM Therapeutics and Nimbus Therapeutics.