

## **Nanoparticle treatment granted orphan drug status for ocular melanoma**

A compound comprised of viral-like nanoparticles that demonstrate highly selective targeting of solid tumors while leaving normal epithelium untouched has been granted orphan drug designation for the treatment of uveal melanoma (also known as ocular melanoma) in the United States, said developer Aura Biosciences (Cambridge, Mass.).

AU-011 is a first-in-class drug conjugated with a potent cell-killing laser-activated molecule that is delivered "efficiently and selectively to cancerous cells, thereby reducing or eliminating the risk of non-specific activity and undesirable toxicity. The molecule is activated by a standard ophthalmologic laser and treatment will be administered in an outpatient visit," Aura said in a news release.

Preclinical testing in animal models showed a complete response following 3 administrations of AU-011, and the treatment appeared to be retina sparing.