

Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc.
Form 424B5
November 17, 2016

Use these links to rapidly review the document

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

[TABLE OF CONTENTS 2](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

**Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(5)
Registration No. 333-214384**

The information in this preliminary prospectus supplement is not complete and may be changed. A registration statement relating to these securities has been filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission and is effective. This preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are not an offer to sell these securities and they are not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED NOVEMBER 16, 2016

Preliminary Prospectus Supplement

(To Prospectus Dated November 14, 2016)

\$65,000,000

Common Stock

We are offering \$65,000,000 of shares of our common stock. Our common stock is listed on The NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol "ACRS." The last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016 was \$23.43 per share.

Investing in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. See "Risk Factors" beginning on page S-7 of this prospectus supplement, page 6 of the accompanying prospectus and under similar headings in the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

We are an "emerging growth company" under applicable Securities and Exchange Commission rules and are eligible for reduced public company disclosure requirements. See "Prospectus Supplement Summary Implications of Being an Emerging Growth Company."

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

| | PER SHARE | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Public Offering Price | \$ | \$ |
| Underwriting Discounts and Commissions ⁽¹⁾ | \$ | \$ |
| Proceeds to Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. before expenses | \$ | \$ |

(1)

We have agreed to reimburse the underwriters for certain expenses. See "Underwriting" beginning on page S-15 of this prospectus supplement for additional information regarding underwriter compensation.

Delivery of the shares of common stock is expected to be made on or about _____, 2016. We have granted the underwriters an option for a period of 30 days to purchase up to an additional \$9,750,000 of shares of our common stock. If the underwriters exercise the option in full, the total underwriting discounts and commissions payable by us will be \$ _____ and the total proceeds to us, before expenses, will be \$ _____.

Jefferies

**Leerink Partners
William Blair**

Guggenheim Securities

JMP Securities

Prospectus Supplement dated _____, 2016

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT</u> | <u>S-ii</u> |
| <u>SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u> | <u>S-iii</u> |
| <u>PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY</u> | <u>S-1</u> |
| <u>RISK FACTORS</u> | <u>S-7</u> |
| <u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u> | <u>S-9</u> |
| <u>DIVIDEND POLICY</u> | <u>S-9</u> |
| <u>DILUTION</u> | <u>S-10</u> |
| <u>MATERIAL U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES TO NON-U.S. HOLDERS</u> | <u>S-11</u> |
| <u>UNDERWRITING</u> | <u>S-15</u> |
| <u>LEGAL MATTERS</u> | <u>S-23</u> |
| <u>EXPERTS</u> | <u>S-23</u> |
| <u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u> | <u>S-23</u> |
| <u>INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE</u> | <u>S-24</u> |
| <u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u> | |
| | <u>ii</u> |
| <u>SUMMARY</u> | <u>1</u> |
| <u>RISK FACTORS</u> | <u>6</u> |
| <u>SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u> | <u>7</u> |
| <u>RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES</u> | <u>9</u> |
| <u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u> | <u>10</u> |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK</u> | <u>11</u> |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES</u> | <u>17</u> |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS</u> | <u>24</u> |
| <u>LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES</u> | <u>27</u> |
| <u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u> | <u>31</u> |
| <u>LEGAL MATTERS</u> | <u>33</u> |
| <u>EXPERTS</u> | <u>33</u> |
| <u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u> | <u>33</u> |
| <u>INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE</u> | <u>33</u> |

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

This document is part of a "shelf" registration statement on Form S-3 that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the SEC, and is in two parts. The first part is this prospectus supplement, which describes the specific terms of this common stock offering and also adds to and updates information contained in the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference herein. The second part, the accompanying prospectus, provides more general information. Generally, when we refer to this prospectus, we are referring to both parts of this document combined. To the extent there is a conflict between the information contained in this prospectus supplement and the information contained in the accompanying prospectus or any document incorporated by reference therein filed prior to the date of this prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information in this prospectus supplement; provided that if any statement in one of these documents is inconsistent with a statement in another document having a later date—for example, a document incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus—the statement in the document having the later date modifies or supersedes the earlier statement.

We further note that the representations, warranties and covenants made by us in any agreement that is filed as an exhibit to any document that is incorporated by reference herein were made solely for the benefit of the parties to such agreement, including, in some cases, for the purpose of allocating risk among the parties to such agreements, and should not be deemed to be a representation, warranty or covenant to you. Moreover, such representations, warranties or covenants were accurate only as of the date when made. Accordingly, such representations, warranties and covenants should not be relied on as accurately representing the current state of our affairs.

We have not authorized anyone to provide any information other than that contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or in any free writing prospectus prepared by or on behalf of us or to which we have referred you. We take no responsibility for, and can provide no assurance as to the reliability of, any other information that others may give you. This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus do not constitute an offer to sell, or a solicitation of an offer to purchase, the securities offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus in any jurisdiction to or from any person to whom or from whom it is unlawful to make such offer or solicitation of an offer in such jurisdiction. The information contained in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus, or incorporated by reference herein or therein is accurate only as of the respective dates thereof, regardless of the time of delivery of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus or of any sale of our common stock. It is important for you to read and consider all information contained in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, including the documents incorporated by reference herein and therein, in making your investment decision. You should also read and consider the information in the documents to which we have referred you in the sections entitled "Where You Can Find More Information" and "Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference" in this prospectus supplement and in the accompanying prospectus.

We are offering to sell, and seeking offers to buy, shares of our common stock only in jurisdictions where offers and sales are permitted. The distribution of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and the offering of the common stock in certain jurisdictions may be restricted by law. Persons outside the United States who come into possession of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus must inform themselves about, and observe any restrictions relating to, the offering of the common stock and the distribution of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus outside the United States. This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus do not constitute, and may not be used in connection with, an offer to sell, or a solicitation of an offer to buy, any securities offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus by any person in any jurisdiction in which it is unlawful for such person to make such an offer or solicitation.

Unless otherwise stated, all references in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus to "we," "us," "our," "Aclaris," "company" and similar designations refer, collectively, to Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. and, where appropriate, our subsidiaries.

Table of Contents

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the information incorporated by reference herein and therein contain forward-looking statements that involve substantial risks and uncertainties. All statements, other than statements of historical fact, contained in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the information incorporated by reference herein and therein, including statements regarding our strategy, future operations, future financial position, future revenue, projected costs, prospects, plans and objectives of management, are forward-looking statements. The words "anticipate," "believe," "estimate," "expect," "intend," "may," "plan," "predict," "project," "target," "potential," "will," "would," "could," "should," "continue," and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements, although not all forward-looking statements contain these identifying words.

The forward-looking statements in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the information incorporated by reference herein and therein include, among other things, statements about:

- § our plans to develop and commercialize our drug candidates;
- § the timing of our planned clinical trials of our other drug candidates;
- § the timing of our New Drug Application, or NDA, and Marketing Authorization Application, or MAA, filings for A-101 for the treatment of SK and the timing of our investigational new drug application, or IND, for ATI-50002;
- § the timing of and our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals for our drug candidates;
- § the clinical utility of our drug candidates;
- § our commercialization, marketing and manufacturing capabilities and strategy;
- § our expectations about the willingness of patients to pay out of pocket for procedures using our drug candidates;
- § our expectations about the willingness of dermatologists to use our drug candidates;
- § our intellectual property position;
- § our plans to in-license or acquire additional drug candidates for other dermatological conditions to build a fully integrated dermatology company; and
- § our estimates regarding future revenue, expenses and needs for additional financing.

We may not actually achieve the plans, intentions or expectations disclosed in our forward-looking statements, and you should not place undue reliance on our forward-looking statements. Actual results or events could differ materially from the plans, intentions and expectations disclosed in the forward-looking statements we make. We have included important factors in the cautionary statements included in this prospectus supplement, particularly in the "Risk Factors" section, that we believe could cause actual results or events to differ materially from the forward-looking statements that we make. Our forward-looking statements do not reflect the potential impact of any future acquisitions, mergers, dispositions, joint ventures or investments we may make.

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

You should read this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the information incorporated by reference herein and therein completely and with the understanding that our actual future results may be materially different from what we expect. We do not assume any obligation to update any forward-looking statements.

S-iii

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY

This summary highlights selected information contained elsewhere in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and in the documents we incorporate by reference. This summary does not contain all of the information you should consider before investing in our common stock. You should read this entire prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus carefully, especially the risks of investing in our common stock discussed under "Risk Factors" beginning on page S-7 of this prospectus supplement and under similar headings in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2016, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, along with our consolidated financial statements and notes to those consolidated financial statements and the other information incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, before making an investment decision.

Company Overview

We are a clinical-stage specialty pharmaceutical company focused on identifying, developing and commercializing innovative and differentiated drugs to address significant unmet needs in dermatology. Our lead drug candidate, A-101 Topical Solution, is a proprietary high-concentration hydrogen peroxide topical solution that we are developing as a prescription treatment for seborrheic keratosis, or SK, a common non-malignant skin tumor. We have completed three Phase 2 clinical trials of A-101 in over 300 patients with SK. In these trials, following one or two applications of A-101, we observed clinically relevant and statistically significant improvements in clearing SK lesions on the face, trunk and extremities of the body. In the first quarter of 2016, we initiated two multi-center, randomized, double-blind, vehicle-controlled, parallel group Phase 3 clinical trials and one open label Phase 3 clinical trial of A-101 in patients with SK. In November 2016, we announced positive top-line results from these Phase 3 clinical trials, which are summarized below. Based on these results, we plan to submit a New Drug Application, or NDA, for A-101 for the treatment of SK to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, in the first quarter of 2017 and a Marketing Authorization Application, or MAA, in the European Union in mid-2017.

We also intend to develop A-101 as a prescription treatment for common warts, also known as verruca vulgaris, and A-102, a proprietary gel dosage form of hydrogen peroxide, as a prescription treatment for SK and common warts. We recently completed a Phase 2 clinical trial evaluating 40% and 45% concentrations of A-101 for the treatment of common warts. In this Phase 2 clinical trial, in which 90 patients completed an eight-week treatment period, we observed statistically significant improvements in the mean change in the Physician's Wart Assessment score and in complete clearance of common warts in patients treated with the 45% concentration of A-101 compared to placebo. Based on these results, we plan to continue the development of the 45% concentration of A-101 as a treatment for common warts.

We have also in-licensed the exclusive, worldwide rights to inhibitors of the Janus kinase, or JAK, family of enzymes, for specified dermatological conditions. We plan to develop these JAK inhibitors, ATI-50001 and ATI-50002, as potential treatments for hair loss associated with an autoimmune skin disease known as alopecia areata and potentially for other dermatological conditions, including androgenetic alopecia, also known as male or female pattern baldness, and vitiligo. We submitted an investigational new drug application, or IND, to the FDA for ATI-50001 in October 2016 and intend to commence a proof-of-concept trial for this drug candidate in the first half of 2017. We intend to submit an IND to the FDA for ATI-50002 and to commence a proof-of-concept trial for this drug candidate in the first half of 2017. We also intend to in-license or acquire additional drug candidates for other dermatological conditions to build a fully integrated dermatology company.

Table of Contents

Recent Phase 3 Clinical Trial Results for A-101 for the Treatment of SK

Trial Design

Our two Phase 3 clinical trials, SEBK-301 and SEBK-302, were multi-center, randomized, double-blind, vehicle-controlled, parallel group trials designed to evaluate the safety, tolerability and efficacy of A-101 topical solution at 40.0% concentration compared to a topical solution vehicle control (placebo). We enrolled a total of 937 subjects in the trials at 34 sites in the United States. Of the 937 subjects enrolled in the trials, 467 subjects received the 40.0% concentration of A-101 and 470 subjects received the vehicle control. The age of the subjects ranged from 42 to 91 years, with a mean age of 69. Approximately 58% of the subjects were female and approximately 42% of the subjects were male in each trial. All skin types were represented in the patient population and approximately 98% of the subjects in each trial were Caucasian. Inclusion criteria included a clinical diagnosis of stable, clinically typical SKs of specified size and thickness. Subjects were required to have four target SK lesions, with at least one SK lesion on the face and one SK lesion on the trunk or extremities.

The evaluation period for both trials consisted of 106 days after initial treatment. During the first visit, which occurred on Day 1 of the evaluation period, eligible subjects were randomized to receive the vehicle control or the 40.0% concentration of A-101 and the applications were performed. Three weeks after the initial treatment, any target lesion that met the retreatment criteria received a second application of A-101 or vehicle control.

Endpoints

The primary endpoint of both clinical trials was the percentage of subjects who achieved a Physician's Lesion Assessment, or PLA, score of zero for all four target SK lesions at the end of the trial. The PLA score is a method we have developed and validated to measure the severity of lesions and uses a scale ranging from zero to three. In this trial, a PLA score of zero represented clearance of the SK lesion; a PLA score of one represented near clearance of the SK lesion; a PLA score of two represented a thin SK lesion; and a PLA score of three represented a thick SK lesion. The secondary endpoint was the percentage of subjects with clearance of three of the four target SK lesions, and ancillary endpoints included the mean per-patient percentage of target lesions judged to be clear or near clear and the percentage of all target lesions on the face judged to be clear or near clear.

Efficacy Results

For the primary endpoint, we observed statistically significant improvements following treatment with A-101 as compared to the vehicle in both trials. In the SEBK-301 trial, 4.0% of subjects treated with A-101 achieved clearance of all four target SK lesions, with a p-value of less than 0.002. In the SEBK-302 trial, 7.8% of treated subjects achieved clearance of all four target SK lesions, with a p-value of less than 0.0001. None of the subjects who received placebo achieved clearance of all four target SK lesions in either trial. P-value is a conventional statistical method for measuring the statistical significance of clinical results. A p-value of less than 0.05 is generally considered to represent statistical significance, meaning that there is a less than five percent likelihood that the observed results occurred by chance.

In addition, for each of the secondary and ancillary endpoints, we also observed statistically significant improvements following treatment with A-101 as compared to the vehicle in both trials. In the SEBK-301 trial, 13.5% of subjects treated with A-101 achieved clearance of at least three of the four target SK lesions, and in the SEBK-302 trial, 23.0% of treated subjects achieved clearance of at least three of the four target SK lesions. None of the patients treated with placebo achieved clearance of at least three of four target SK lesions. In SEBK-301, 47.5% of target lesions, on a mean per-patient basis, treated with A-101 achieved clearance or near clearance, while 10.2% achieved clearance or near clearance in the placebo group. In SEBK-302, 54.3% of target lesions, on a mean per-patient basis, treated with A-101 achieved clearance or near clearance, while 4.7% achieved clearance or near clearance in the placebo group. Finally, in SEBK-301, 64.6% of SK lesions on the face treated with A-101 were judged to be clear

Table of Contents

or near clear, while 14.7% of SK lesions on the face treated with placebo were judged to be clear or near clear; in SEBK-302, 65.9% of SK lesions on the face treated with A-101 were judged to be clear or near clear, while 6.2% of SK lesions on the face treated with placebo were judged to be clear or near clear.

Safety Results

A-101 was generally well tolerated in both the SEBK-301 and SEBK-302 trials. There were no treatment-related serious adverse events among subjects treated with A-101. The most common adverse events were nasopharyngitis and sinusitis, which were determined to be unrelated to A-101. Local skin reactions were predominantly considered to be mild. The rates of hypopigmentation, hyperpigmentation and scarring classified as greater than mild were less than one percent in all groups in both trials. Additionally, the safety results from our open label Phase 3 clinical trial of A-101, in which we enrolled 147 subjects at 10 sites in the United States, were consistent with the SEBK-301 and SEBK-302 trials.

Risks Associated With Our Business

Our business is subject to a number of risks of which you should be aware before making an investment decision. These risks are discussed more fully in the "Risk Factors" section of this prospectus supplement immediately following this prospectus supplement summary and in the "Risk Factors" sections in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2016, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement. These risks include the following:

§ We have incurred significant losses since our inception. We expect to incur losses over the next several years and may never achieve or maintain profitability.

§ We will need substantial additional funding to meet our financial obligations and to pursue our business objectives. If we are unable to raise capital when needed, we could be forced to curtail our planned operations and the pursuit of our growth strategy.

§ We are early in our development efforts and have only one drug candidate, A-101 for the treatment of SK, for which we have completed clinical trials. If we are unable to successfully develop, receive regulatory approval for and commercialize A-101 for the treatment of SK or any other drug candidates, or experience significant delays in doing so, our business will be harmed.

§ We expect third-party payors generally will not cover the use of our drug candidates for the treatment of SK and, accordingly, our success will be dependent upon the willingness of patients to pay out of pocket for procedures using these drug candidates.

§ Our future success depends on our ability to retain key executives and to attract, retain and motivate qualified personnel.

§ If we are unable to establish sales, marketing and distribution capabilities for A-101 or any other drug candidate that may receive regulatory approval, we may not be successful in commercializing those drug candidates if and when they are approved.

§ If we are unable to obtain and maintain patent protection for our drug candidates, or if the scope of the patent protection obtained is not sufficiently broad, our competitors could develop and commercialize technology and drugs similar or identical to ours, and our ability to successfully commercialize our technology and drug candidates may be impaired.

§ We face substantial competition, which may result in others discovering, developing or commercializing drugs before or more successfully than we do.

Company Information

We were incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware in July 2012. Our principal executive offices are located at 101 Lindenwood Drive, Suite 400, Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355. Our telephone number is (484) 324-7933.

S-3

Table of Contents

Available Information

Our internet website address is www.aclaristx.com. The information contained on our website is not incorporated by reference into this prospectus, and you should not consider any information contained on, or that can be accessed through, our website as part of this prospectus or in deciding whether to purchase our securities.

"Aclaris", the Aclaris logo, and our other trademarks or service marks appearing in this prospectus are our property. This prospectus and the information incorporated herein by reference contains additional trade names, trademarks and service marks of others, which are the property of their respective owners.

Implications of Being an Emerging Growth Company

As a company with less than \$1 billion in revenue during our last fiscal year, we qualify as an "emerging growth company" as defined in the Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act of 2012, or the JOBS Act. For so long as we remain an emerging growth company, we are permitted and intend to rely on exemptions from certain disclosure requirements that are applicable to other public companies that are not emerging growth companies. These exemptions include:

- § not being required to comply with the auditor attestation requirements in the assessment of our internal control over financial reporting;
- § not being required to comply with any requirement that may be adopted by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board regarding mandatory audit firm rotation or a supplement to the auditor's report providing additional information about the audit and the financial statements;
- § reduced disclosure obligations regarding executive compensation; and
- § exemptions from the requirements of holding a nonbinding advisory vote on executive compensation and stockholder approval of any golden parachute payments not previously approved.

We will remain an "emerging growth company" until the earliest of (i) the last day of the fiscal year in which we have total annual gross revenues of \$1 billion or more; (ii) December 31, 2020; (iii) the date on which we have issued more than \$1 billion in nonconvertible debt during the previous three years; or (iv) the date on which we are deemed to be a large accelerated filer under the rules of the SEC based on the market value of our common stock held by non-affiliates.

In addition, the JOBS Act provides that an emerging growth company can take advantage of an extended transition period for complying with new or revised accounting standards. This allows an emerging growth company to delay the adoption of certain accounting standards until those standards would otherwise apply to private companies. We have irrevocably elected not to avail ourselves of this exemption from new or revised accounting standards and, therefore, are subject to the same new or revised accounting standards as other public companies that are not emerging growth companies.

Table of Contents

THE OFFERING

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Common Stock offered by Aclaris | \$65,000,000 of shares |
| Common Stock to be outstanding after this offering | 24,198,216 shares, which is based on an aggregate offering of \$65,000,000 of our common stock at an assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share (the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016). |
| Option to purchase additional shares | We have granted the underwriters an option to purchase up to an additional \$9,750,000 of shares of our common stock from us. The underwriters can exercise this option, in whole or in part, at any time within 30 days from the date of this prospectus supplement. |
| Use of Proceeds | We estimate that the net proceeds to us from this offering, after deducting estimated underwriting discounts and commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us, will be approximately \$60.8 million, or approximately \$70.0 million if the underwriters exercise their option to purchase additional shares from us in full, in each case, based on an assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share (the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016). We plan to use the net proceeds from this offering primarily to fund the submission of an NDA to the FDA and an MAA to the EMA for the regulatory approval of A-101 for the treatment of SK, to develop a commercial sales force to market A-101 for the treatment of SK, if approved, to fund continued research and development of A-101 for the treatment of common warts and ATI-50001 and ATI-50002 for the treatment of alopecia areata, to fund preclinical development and formulation of a JAK inhibitor drug candidate for the treatment of androgenetic alopecia and vitiligo, and for working capital and general corporate purposes. See "Use of Proceeds" on page S-9 of this prospectus supplement. |
| Risk Factors | You should read the "Risk Factors" section of this prospectus supplement beginning on page S-7, page 6 of the accompanying prospectus and the "Risk Factors" sections in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2016, which are incorporated by reference, for a discussion of factors to consider carefully before deciding to invest in shares of our common stock. |
| NASDAQ Global Select Market symbol | ACRS |
| The number of shares of our common stock to be outstanding after this offering is based on 21,423,995 shares of our common stock outstanding as of September 30, 2016 and excludes: | |
| § | 1,867,501 shares of our common stock issuable upon the exercise of stock options outstanding as of September 30, 2016, at a weighted average exercise price of \$14.13 per share; |

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

Table of Contents

§ 89,000 shares of common stock subject to restricted stock units outstanding as of September 30, 2016; and

§ 1,608,205 shares of common stock reserved for future issuance under our 2015 equity incentive plan, plus any additional shares of our common stock that may become available under our 2015 equity incentive plan.

Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this prospectus supplement assumes no exercise of the outstanding options described above and no exercise by the underwriters of their option to purchase additional shares of our common stock.

S-6

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

Investing in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. Before you decide to invest in our common stock, you should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties described below together with all other information contained in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and in our filings with the SEC that we have incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. If any of the following risks actually occurs, our business, prospects, operating results and financial condition could suffer materially. In such event, the trading price of our common stock could decline and you might lose all or part of your investment.

Risks Related to this Offering

Raising additional capital, including as a result of this offering, may cause dilution to our stockholders, restrict our operations or require us to relinquish rights to our drug candidates.

Until such time, if ever, as we can generate substantial revenue from the sale of our drugs, we expect to finance our cash needs through a combination of equity offerings, debt financings and license and development agreements. We do not currently have any committed external source of funds. To the extent that we raise additional capital through the sale of equity securities, including from this offering, or convertible debt securities, your ownership interest will be diluted, and the terms of these securities may include liquidation or other preferences that adversely affect your rights as a common stockholder. Debt financing and preferred equity financing, if available, may involve agreements that include covenants limiting or restricting our ability to take specific actions, such as incurring additional debt, making capital expenditures or declaring dividends.

If we raise additional funds through collaborations, strategic alliances or marketing, distribution or licensing arrangements with third parties, we may be required to relinquish valuable rights to our research programs or drug candidates or grant licenses on terms that may not be favorable to us. If we are unable to raise additional funds through equity or debt financings or other arrangements with third parties when needed, we may be required to delay, limit, reduce or terminate our drug development or future commercialization efforts or grant rights to third parties to develop and market drug candidates that we would otherwise prefer to develop and market ourselves.

If you purchase shares of common stock in this offering, you will suffer immediate dilution of your investment.

The price of our common stock in this offering is substantially higher than the net tangible book value per share of our common stock. Therefore, if you purchase shares of our common stock in this offering, you will pay a price per share that substantially exceeds our net tangible book value per share after this offering. To the extent outstanding options are exercised, you will incur further dilution. Based on an assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016, you will experience immediate dilution of \$17.57 per share, representing the difference between our as adjusted net tangible book value per share after giving effect to this offering and the public offering price.

We have broad discretion over the use of our cash and cash equivalents, including the net proceeds we receive in this offering, and may not use them effectively.

Our management has broad discretion to use our cash and cash equivalents, including the net proceeds we receive in this offering, to fund our operations and could spend these funds in ways that do not improve our results of operations or enhance the value of our common stock. The failure by our management to apply these funds effectively could result in financial losses that could have an adverse effect on our business, cause the price of our common stock to decline and delay the development of our drug candidates. Pending

Table of Contents

their use to fund operations, we may invest our cash and cash equivalents in a manner that does not produce income or that loses value.

A significant portion of our total outstanding shares are eligible to be sold into the market in the near future, which could cause the market price of our common stock to drop significantly, even if our business is doing well.

Sales of a substantial number of shares of our common stock in the public market, or the perception in the market that the holders of a large number of shares intend to sell shares, could reduce the market price of our common stock. Upon completion of this offering, based on our shares outstanding as of September 30, 2016 and an assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016, we will have 24.2 million shares of common stock outstanding, assuming no exercise of the underwriters' option to purchase additional shares of common stock. Of these shares, 2.4 million are subject to a contractual lock-up with the underwriters for this offering for a period of 90 days following this offering and 2.3 million are subject to a contractual lock-up with the underwriters for this offering for a period of 60 days following this offering. These shares can be sold, subject to any applicable volume limitations under federal securities laws, after the earlier of the expiration of, or release from, the 90-day lock-up period. The balance of our outstanding shares of common stock, including any shares purchased in this offering, may be resold into the public market immediately without restriction, unless owned or purchased by our affiliates. Moreover, after this offering, some of the holders of our common stock will have the right, subject to specified conditions, to require us to file registration statements covering their shares or to include their shares in registration statements that we may file for ourselves or other stockholders.

As of September 30, 2016, there were approximately 3.6 million shares subject to outstanding options and restricted stock units or that are otherwise issuable under our equity compensation plans, all of which shares we have registered under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, on a registration statement on Form S-8. These shares can be freely sold in the public market upon issuance, subject to volume limitations applicable to affiliates and the lock-up agreements described above, to the extent applicable.

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

We estimate that the net proceeds to us from our issuance and sale of shares of our common stock in this offering will be approximately \$60.8 million, or approximately \$70.0 million if the underwriters exercise in full their option to purchase up to \$9,750,000 of additional shares of common stock, based on the assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016, and after deducting estimated underwriting discounts and commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us.

We currently intend to use the net proceeds from this offering primarily to fund the submission of an NDA to the FDA and an MAA in the European Union for the regulatory approval of A-101 for the treatment of SK, to develop a commercial sales force to market A-101 for the treatment of SK, if approved, to fund continued research and development of A-101 for the treatment of common warts and ATI-50001 and ATI-50002 for the treatment of alopecia areata, to fund preclinical development and formulation of a JAK inhibitor drug candidate for the treatment of androgenetic alopecia and vitiligo, and for working capital and general corporate purposes. We may also use a portion of the net proceeds to invest in or acquire businesses or technologies that we believe are complementary to our own, although we have no current plans, commitments or agreements with respect to any acquisitions as of the date of this prospectus supplement.

This expected use of our net proceeds from this offering represents our intentions based upon our current plans and business conditions, which could change in the future as our plans and business conditions evolve. The amounts and timing of our actual expenditures may vary significantly depending on numerous factors, including the progress of our drug candidate development, the status of and results from clinical trials, as well as any collaborations that we may enter into with third parties for our drug candidates, and any unforeseen cash needs.

As a result, our management will retain broad discretion over the allocation of the net proceeds from this offering, and investors will be relying on the judgment of our management regarding the application of the net proceeds from this offering. The timing and amount of our actual expenditures will be based on many factors, including cash flows from operations and the anticipated growth of our business. Pending these uses, we expect to invest the net proceeds in short-term, interest bearing obligations, certificates of deposit or direct or guaranteed obligations of the United States. The goal with respect to the investment of these net proceeds is capital preservation and liquidity so that such funds are readily available to fund our operations.

Based on the planned use of proceeds described above, we believe that the net proceeds from this offering and our current cash, cash equivalents and marketable securities will be sufficient to enable us to fund our operating expenses and capital expenditure requirements for at least the next 18 months. We have based this estimate on assumptions that may prove to be incorrect, and we could use our available capital resources sooner than we currently expect.

DIVIDEND POLICY

We have never declared or paid any dividends on our common stock. We anticipate that we will retain all of our future earnings, if any, for use in the operation and expansion of our business and do not anticipate paying cash dividends in the foreseeable future.

Table of Contents**DILUTION**

If you invest in our common stock in this offering, your interest will be diluted immediately to the extent of the difference between the public offering price per share you will pay in this offering and the as adjusted net tangible book value per share of our common stock after this offering. Our historical net tangible book value as of September 30, 2016 was \$81.1 million, or \$3.79 per share of common stock. Historical net tangible book value per share represents the amount of our total tangible assets less total liabilities, divided by the number of shares of our common stock outstanding on September 30, 2016.

After giving effect to our issuance and sale of \$65,000,000 of shares of common stock in this offering at an assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016, and after deducting estimated underwriting discounts and commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us, our as adjusted net tangible book value as of September 30, 2016 would have been \$141.9 million, or \$5.86 per share. This represents an immediate increase in as adjusted net tangible book value per share of \$2.08 to existing stockholders and immediate dilution of \$17.57 in as adjusted net tangible book value per share to new investors purchasing common stock in this offering. Dilution per share to new investors is determined by subtracting as adjusted net tangible book value per share after this offering from the public offering price per share paid by new investors. The following table illustrates this per share dilution to the new investors purchasing shares of common stock in this offering without giving effect to the option to purchase additional shares granted to the underwriters:

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Assumed public offering price per share | \$ | 23.43 |
| Net tangible book value per share as of September 30, 2016 | \$ | 3.79 |
| Increase per share attributable to sale of shares of common stock in this offering | | 2.08 |
| As adjusted net tangible book value per share after this offering | | 5.86 |
| Dilution per share to new investors | \$ | 17.57 |

A \$1.00 increase (decrease) in the assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share, which was the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016, would increase (decrease) dilution per share to new investors by approximately \$0.97 after deducting estimated underwriting discounts and commissions and estimated offering expenses payable by us.

If the underwriters exercise their option to purchase \$9,750,000 of additional shares in full at the assumed public offering price of \$23.43 per share, the last reported sale price of our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market on November 15, 2016, the as adjusted net tangible book value will increase to \$6.14 per share, representing an immediate increase to existing stockholders of \$2.35 per share and an immediate dilution of \$17.29 per share to new investors. If any shares are issued upon exercise of outstanding options at prices below the assumed public offering price, you will experience further dilution.

The above discussion and table are based on 21,423,995 shares of our common stock outstanding as of September 30, 2016 and exclude:

- § 1,867,501 shares of our common stock issuable upon the exercise of stock options outstanding as of September 30, 2016, at a weighted average exercise price of \$14.13 per share;
- § 89,000 shares of common stock subject to restricted stock units outstanding as of September 30, 2016; and
- § 1,608,205 shares of common stock reserved for future issuance under our 2015 equity incentive plan, plus any additional shares of our common stock that may become available under our 2015 equity incentive plan.

To the extent that any options are exercised, new options are issued under our 2015 equity incentive plan or we otherwise issue additional shares of common stock in the future at a price less than the public offering price, there may be further dilution to new investors purchasing common stock in this offering.

Table of Contents

MATERIAL U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES TO NON-U.S. HOLDERS

The following is a general discussion of the material U.S. federal income tax considerations applicable to non-U.S. holders (as defined herein) with respect to their ownership and disposition of shares of our common stock issued pursuant to this offering. All prospective non-U.S. holders of our common stock should consult their tax advisors with respect to the U.S. federal, state, local and non-U.S. tax consequences of the purchase, ownership and disposition of our common stock. In general, a non-U.S. holder means a beneficial owner of our common stock (other than a partnership or an entity or arrangement treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes) that is not, for U.S. federal income tax purposes:

- § an individual who is a citizen or resident of the United States;
- § a corporation, or an entity treated as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes, created or organized in the United States or under the laws of the United States or of any state thereof or the District of Columbia;
- § an estate, the income of which is subject to U.S. federal income tax regardless of its source; or
- § a trust if (1) a U.S. court can exercise primary supervision over the trust's administration and one or more U.S. persons have the authority to control all of the trust's substantial decisions or (2) the trust has a valid election in effect under applicable U.S. Treasury Regulations to be treated as a U.S. person.

This discussion is based on current provisions of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, which we refer to as the Code, existing U.S. Treasury Regulations promulgated thereunder, published administrative pronouncements and rulings of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, which we refer to as the IRS, and judicial decisions, all as in effect as of the date of this prospectus. These authorities are subject to change and to differing interpretation, possibly with retroactive effect. Any change or differing interpretation could alter the tax consequences to non-U.S. holders described in this prospectus.

We assume in this discussion that a non-U.S. holder holds shares of our common stock as a capital asset within the meaning of Section 1221 of the Code (generally, for investment). This discussion does not address all aspects of U.S. federal income taxation that may be relevant to a particular non-U.S. holder in light of that non-U.S. holder's individual circumstances, nor does it address any alternative minimum, Medicare contribution, estate or gift tax consequences, or any aspects of U.S. state, local or non-U.S. taxes. This discussion also does not consider any specific facts or circumstances that may apply to a non-U.S. holder and does not address the special tax rules applicable to particular non-U.S. holders, such as holders that own, or are deemed to own, more than 5% of our capital stock (except to the extent specifically set forth below), corporations that accumulate earnings to avoid U.S. federal income tax, tax-exempt organizations, banks, financial institutions, insurance companies, brokers, dealers or traders in securities, commodities or currencies, tax-qualified retirement plans, holders who hold or receive our common stock pursuant to the exercise of employee stock options or otherwise as compensation, holders holding our common stock as part of a hedge, straddle or other risk reduction strategy, conversion transaction or other integrated investment, holders deemed to sell our common stock under the constructive sale provisions of the Code, controlled foreign corporations, passive foreign investment companies and certain former U.S. citizens or long-term residents.

In addition, this discussion does not address the tax treatment of partnerships (or entities or arrangements that are treated as partnerships for U.S. federal income tax purposes) or persons that hold their common stock through such partnerships. If a partnership, including any entity or arrangement treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes, holds shares of our common stock, the U.S. federal income tax treatment of a partner in such partnership will generally depend upon the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. Such partners and partnerships should consult their tax advisors regarding the tax consequences of the purchase, ownership and disposition of our common stock.

Table of Contents

There can be no assurance that a court or the IRS will not challenge one or more of the tax consequences described herein, and we have not obtained, nor do we intend to obtain, a ruling with respect to the U.S. federal income tax consequences to a non-U.S. holder of the purchase, ownership or disposition of our common stock.

Distributions on Our Common Stock

Distributions, if any, on our common stock generally will constitute dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes to the extent paid from our current or accumulated earnings and profits, as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles. If a distribution exceeds our current and accumulated earnings and profits, the excess will be treated as a tax-free return of the non-U.S. holder's investment, up to such holder's adjusted tax basis in the common stock. Any remaining excess will be treated as capital gain from the sale or exchange of such common stock, subject to the tax treatment described below in "Gain on Sale, Exchange or Other Disposition of Our Common Stock." Any such distribution will also be subject to the discussion below under the heading "Foreign Accounts."

Dividends paid to a non-U.S. holder will generally be subject to withholding of U.S. federal income tax at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty between the United States and such holder's country of residence.

Dividends that are treated as effectively connected with a trade or business conducted by a non-U.S. holder within the United States and, if an applicable income tax treaty so provides, that are attributable to a permanent establishment or a fixed base maintained by the non-U.S. holder within the United States, are generally exempt from the 30% withholding tax if the non-U.S. holder satisfies applicable certification and disclosure requirements. However, such U.S. effectively connected income, net of specified deductions and credits, is taxed at the same graduated U.S. federal income tax rates applicable to U.S. persons (as defined in the Code). Any U.S. effectively connected income received by a non-U.S. holder that is a corporation may also, under certain circumstances, be subject to an additional "branch profits tax" at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty between the United States and such holder's country of residence.

To claim a reduction or exemption from withholding, a non-U.S. holder of our common stock generally will be required to provide (a) a properly executed IRS Form W-8BEN or W-8BEN-E (or successor form) and satisfy applicable certification and other requirements to claim the benefit of an applicable income tax treaty between the United States and such holder's country of residence, or (b) a properly executed IRS Form W-8ECI stating that dividends are not subject to withholding because they are effectively connected with such non-U.S. holder's conduct of a trade or business within the United States. Non-U.S. holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding their entitlement to benefits under a relevant income tax treaty.

A non-U.S. holder that is eligible for a reduced rate of U.S. withholding tax under an income tax treaty may obtain a refund or credit of any excess amounts withheld by timely filing an appropriate claim for refund with the IRS.

Gain on Sale, Exchange or Other Disposition of Our Common Stock

Subject to the discussion below regarding backup withholding and foreign accounts, in general, a non-U.S. holder will not be subject to any U.S. federal income tax on any gain realized upon such holder's sale, exchange or other disposition of shares of our common stock unless:

§

the gain is effectively connected with a U.S. trade or business of the non-U.S. holder and, if an applicable income tax treaty so provides, is attributable to a permanent establishment or a fixed base maintained in the United States by such non-U.S. holder, in which case the non-U.S. holder generally will be taxed at the graduated U.S. federal income tax rates applicable to U.S. persons (as defined in the Code) and, if the non-U.S. holder is a foreign corporation, the branch profits tax described above in "Distributions on Our Common Stock" also may apply;

Table of Contents

§

the non-U.S. holder is a nonresident alien individual who is present in the United States for 183 days or more in the taxable year of the disposition and certain other conditions are met, in which case the non-U.S. holder will be subject to a 30% tax (or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty) on the net gain derived from the disposition, which may be offset by U.S. source capital losses of the non-U.S. holder, if any (even though the individual is not considered a resident of the United States); or

§

our common stock constitutes a U.S. real property interest because we are, or have been, at any time during the five-year period preceding such disposition (or the non-U.S. holder's holding period, if shorter) a "U.S. real property holding corporation." Generally, a corporation is a U.S. real property holding corporation only if the fair market value of its U.S. real property interests equals or exceeds 50% of the sum of the fair market value of its worldwide real property interests plus its other assets used or held for use in a trade or business. Although there can be no assurance, we do not believe that we are, or have been, a U.S. real property holding corporation, or that we are likely to become one in the future. Even if we are or become a U.S. real property holding corporation, provided that our common stock is regularly traded, as defined by applicable Treasury Regulations, on an established securities market, our common stock will be treated as a U.S. real property interest only with respect to a non-U.S. holder that holds more than 5% of our outstanding common stock, directly or indirectly, actually or constructively, during the shorter of the 5-year period ending on the date of the disposition or the period that the non-U.S. holder held our common stock. In such case, such non-U.S. holder generally will be taxed on its net gain derived from the disposition at the graduated U.S. federal income tax rates applicable to U.S. persons (as defined in the Code). No assurance can be provided that our common stock will continue to be regularly traded on an established securities market for purposes of the rules described above.

Backup Withholding and Information Reporting

We must report annually to the IRS and to each non-U.S. holder the gross amount of the dividends on our common stock paid to such holder and the tax withheld, if any, with respect to such dividends. Non-U.S. holders will have to comply with specific certification procedures to establish that the holder is not a U.S. person (as defined in the Code) in order to avoid backup withholding at the applicable rate with respect to dividends on our common stock. A non-U.S. holder generally will not be subject to U.S. backup withholding with respect to payments of dividends on our common stock if it certifies its non-U.S. status by providing a valid IRS Form W-8BEN or W-8BEN-E (or successor form) or W-8ECI, or otherwise establishes an exemption; provided we do not have actual knowledge or reason to know such non-U.S. holder is a U.S. person, as defined in the Code. Dividends paid to non-U.S. holders subject to the U.S. withholding tax, as described above in "Distributions on Our Common Stock," generally will be exempt from U.S. backup withholding.

Information reporting and backup withholding will generally apply to the proceeds of a disposition of our common stock by a non-U.S. holder effected by or through the U.S. office of any broker, U.S. or foreign, unless the holder certifies its status as a non-U.S. holder and satisfies certain other requirements, or otherwise establishes an exemption. Generally, information reporting and backup withholding will not apply to a payment of disposition proceeds to a non-U.S. holder where the transaction is effected outside the United States through a non-U.S. office of a broker. However, for information reporting purposes, dispositions effected through a non-U.S. office of a broker with substantial U.S. ownership or operations generally will be treated in a manner similar to dispositions effected through a U.S. office of a broker. Non-U.S. holders should consult their tax advisors regarding the application of the information reporting and backup withholding rules to them.

Copies of information returns may be made available to the tax authorities of the country in which the non-U.S. holder resides or is incorporated under the provisions of a specific treaty or agreement.

Table of Contents

Backup withholding is not an additional tax. Any amounts withheld under the backup withholding rules from a payment to a non-U.S. holder may be allowed as a credit against the non-U.S. holder's U.S. federal income tax liability, if any, and may entitle such holder to a refund, provided that the required information is timely furnished to the IRS.

Foreign Accounts

The Code generally imposes a U.S. federal withholding tax of 30% on dividends and the gross proceeds of a disposition of our common stock paid to a "foreign financial institution" (as specifically defined for this purpose), unless such institution enters into an agreement with the U.S. government to, among other things, withhold on certain payments and to collect and provide to the U.S. tax authorities substantial information regarding U.S. account holders of such institution (which includes certain equity and debt holders of such institution, as well as certain account holders that are foreign entities with U.S. owners) or otherwise qualifies for an exemption from these rules. A U.S. federal withholding tax of 30% also applies to dividends and will apply to the gross proceeds of a disposition of our common stock paid to a non-financial foreign entity (as defined in the Code), unless such entity provides the withholding agent with either a certification that it does not have any substantial direct or indirect U.S. owners or provides information regarding substantial direct and indirect U.S. owners of the entity, or otherwise qualifies for an exemption from these rules. The withholding provisions described above currently apply to dividends paid on our common stock and will generally apply with respect to gross proceeds of a sale or other disposition of our common stock on or after January 1, 2019. Under certain circumstances, a non-U.S. holder might be eligible for refunds or credits of such taxes. An intergovernmental agreement between the United States and an applicable foreign country may modify the requirements described in this paragraph.

EACH PROSPECTIVE INVESTOR SHOULD CONSULT ITS TAX ADVISOR REGARDING THE PARTICULAR U.S. FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AND NON-U.S. TAX CONSEQUENCES OF PURCHASING, HOLDING AND DISPOSING OF OUR COMMON STOCK, INCLUDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANY PROPOSED CHANGE IN APPLICABLE LAWS.

Table of Contents

UNDERWRITING

Subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the underwriting agreement, dated _____, 2016, among us and Jefferies LLC and Leerink Partners LLC, as the representatives of the underwriters named below, we have agreed to sell to the underwriters, and each of the underwriters has agreed, severally and not jointly, to purchase from us, the respective number of shares of common stock shown opposite its name below:

| UNDERWRITERS | NUMBER OF SHARES |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Jefferies LLC | |
| Leerink Partners LLC | |
| Guggenheim Securities, LLC | |
| William Blair & Company, L.L.C. | |
| JMP Securities LLC | |

Total

The underwriting agreement provides that the obligations of the several underwriters are subject to certain conditions precedent such as the receipt by the underwriters of officers' certificates and legal opinions and approval of certain legal matters by their counsel. The underwriting agreement provides that the underwriters will purchase all of the shares of common stock if any of them are purchased. If an underwriter defaults, the underwriting agreement provides that the purchase commitments of the nondefaulting underwriters may be increased or the underwriting agreement may be terminated. We have agreed to indemnify the underwriters and certain of their controlling persons against certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, and to contribute to payments that the underwriters may be required to make in respect of those liabilities.

The underwriters have advised us that, following the completion of this offering, they currently intend to make a market in the common stock as permitted by applicable laws and regulations. However, the underwriters are not obligated to do so, and the underwriters may discontinue any market-making activities at any time without notice in their sole discretion. Accordingly, no assurance can be given as to the liquidity of the trading market for the common stock, that you will be able to sell any of the common stock held by you at a particular time or that the prices that you receive when you sell will be favorable.

The underwriters are offering the shares of common stock subject to their acceptance of the shares of common stock from us and subject to prior sale. The underwriters reserve the right to withdraw, cancel or modify offers to the public and to reject orders in whole or in part. In addition, the underwriters have advised us that they do not intend to confirm sales to any account over which they exercise discretionary authority.

Commission and Expenses

The underwriters have advised us that they propose to offer the shares of common stock to the public at the public offering price set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement and to certain dealers, which may include the underwriters, at that price less a concession not in excess of \$ _____ per share of common stock. After the offering, the public offering price and concession to dealers may be reduced by the representatives. No such reduction will change the amount of proceeds to be received by us as set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

The following table shows the public offering price, the underwriting discounts and commissions that we are to pay the underwriters and the proceeds, before expenses, to us in connection with this offering. Such amounts are shown assuming both no exercise and full exercise of the underwriters' option to purchase additional shares.

| | PER SHARE | | TOTAL | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| | WITHOUT OPTION TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL SHARES | WITH OPTION TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL SHARES | WITHOUT OPTION TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL SHARES | WITH OPTION TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL SHARES |
| Public offering price | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Underwriting discounts and commissions paid by us | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Proceeds to us, before expenses | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |

We estimate expenses payable by us in connection with this offering, other than the underwriting discounts and commissions referred to above, will be approximately \$300,000. We have also agreed to reimburse the underwriters for certain of their expenses in an amount up to \$25,000 in the aggregate.

Listing

Our common stock is listed on The NASDAQ Global Select Market under the trading symbol "ACRS."

Option to Purchase Additional Shares

We have granted to the underwriters an option, exercisable for 30 days from the date of this prospectus supplement, to purchase, from time to time, in whole or in part, up to an aggregate of _____ additional shares of common stock from us at the public offering price set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement, less underwriting discounts and commissions. If the underwriters exercise this option, each underwriter will be obligated, subject to specified conditions, to purchase a number of additional shares of common stock proportionate to that underwriter's initial purchase commitment as indicated in the table above.

No Sales of Similar Securities

We and each of our executive officers and directors have agreed, subject to specified exceptions, not to directly or indirectly:

- § sell, offer to sell, contract to sell or lend any shares or related securities currently or hereafter owned either of record or beneficially (as defined in Rule 13d-3 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act), or
- § effect any short sale, or establish or increase any "put equivalent position" (as defined in Rule 16a-1(h) under the Exchange Act) or liquidate or decrease any "call equivalent position" (as defined in Rule 16a-1(b) under the Exchange Act) of any shares or related securities, or
- § pledge, hypothecate or grant any security interest in any shares or related securities, or
- § in any other way transfer or dispose of any shares or related securities, or
- § enter into any swap, hedge or similar arrangement or agreement that transfers, in whole or in part, the economic risk of ownership of any shares or related securities, regardless of whether any such transaction is to be settled in securities, in cash or otherwise, or

Table of Contents

§

publicly announce the intention to do any of the foregoing for a period of 90 days after the date of this prospectus supplement without the prior written consent of Jefferies LLC and Leerink Partners LLC.

One of our stockholders, Sofinnova Venture Partners VIII, L.P., has agreed to this restriction for a period of 60 days.

This restriction terminates after the close of trading of the common stock on and including the 90th day after the date of this prospectus supplement. Jefferies LLC and Leerink Partners LLC may, in their sole discretion and at any time or from time to time before the termination of the 90-day period release all or any portion of the securities subject to lock-up agreements. There are no existing agreements between the underwriters and any of our stockholders who will execute a lock-up agreement, providing consent to the sale of shares prior to the expiration of the lock-up period.

Stabilization

The underwriters have advised us that they, pursuant to Regulation M under the Exchange Act, may engage in short sale transactions, stabilizing transactions, syndicate covering transactions or the imposition of penalty bids in connection with this offering. These activities may have the effect of stabilizing or maintaining the market price of the common stock at a level above that which might otherwise prevail in the open market. Establishing short sales positions may involve either "covered" short sales or "naked" short sales.

"Covered" short sales are sales made in an amount not greater than the underwriters' option to purchase additional shares of our common stock in this offering. The underwriters may close out any covered short position by either exercising their option to purchase additional shares of our common stock or purchasing shares of our common stock in the open market. In determining the source of shares to close out the covered short position, the underwriters will consider, among other things, the price of shares available for purchase in the open market as compared to the price at which they may purchase shares through the option to purchase additional shares.

"Naked" short sales are sales in excess of the option to purchase additional shares of our common stock. The underwriters must close out any naked short position by purchasing shares in the open market. A naked short position is more likely to be created if the underwriters are concerned that there may be downward pressure on the price of the shares of our common stock in the open market after pricing that could adversely affect investors who purchase in this offering.

A stabilizing bid is a bid for the purchase of shares of common stock on behalf of the underwriters for the purpose of fixing or maintaining the price of the common stock. A syndicate covering transaction is the bid for or the purchase of shares of common stock on behalf of the underwriters to reduce a short position incurred by the underwriters in connection with the offering. Similar to other purchase transactions, the underwriters' purchases to cover the syndicate short sales may have the effect of raising or maintaining the market price of our common stock or preventing or retarding a decline in the market price of our common stock. As a result, the price of our common stock may be higher than the price that might otherwise exist in the open market. A penalty bid is an arrangement permitting the underwriters to reclaim the selling concession otherwise accruing to a syndicate member in connection with the offering if the common stock originally sold by such syndicate member are purchased in a syndicate covering transaction and therefore have not been effectively placed by such syndicate member. Neither we, nor any of the underwriters make any representation or prediction as to the direction or magnitude of any effect that the transactions described above may have on the price of our common stock. The underwriters are not obligated to engage in these activities and, if commenced, any of the activities may be discontinued at any time.

The underwriters may also engage in passive market making transactions in our common stock on The NASDAQ Global Select Market in accordance with Rule 103 of Regulation M during a period before the

Table of Contents

commencement of offers or sales of shares of our common stock in this offering and extending through the completion of distribution. A passive market maker must display its bid at a price not in excess of the highest independent bid of that security. However, if all independent bids are lowered below the passive market maker's bid, that bid must then be lowered when specified purchase limits are exceeded.

Electronic Distribution

A prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus in electronic format may be made available by e-mail or on the web sites or through online services maintained by one or more of the underwriters or their affiliates. In those cases, prospective investors may view offering terms online and may be allowed to place orders online. The underwriters may agree with us to allocate a specific number of shares of common stock for sale to online brokerage account holders. Any such allocation for online distributions will be made by the underwriters on the same basis as other allocations. Other than this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus in electronic format, the information on the underwriters' web sites and any information contained in any other web site maintained by any of the underwriters is not part of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus, has not been approved and/or endorsed by us or the underwriters and should not be relied upon by investors.

Other Activities and Relationships

The underwriters and certain of their affiliates are full service financial institutions engaged in various activities, which may include securities trading, commercial and investment banking, financial advisory, investment management, investment research, principal investment, hedging, financing and brokerage activities. The underwriters and certain of their affiliates have, from time to time, performed, and may in the future perform, various commercial and investment banking and financial advisory services for us and our affiliates, for which they received or will receive customary fees and expenses.

In the ordinary course of their various business activities, the underwriters and certain of their affiliates may make or hold a broad array of investments and actively trade debt and equity securities (or related derivative securities) and financial instruments (including bank loans) for their own account and for the accounts of their customers, and such investment and securities activities may involve securities and/or instruments issued by us and our affiliates. If the underwriters or their respective affiliates have a lending relationship with us, they routinely hedge their credit exposure to us consistent with their customary risk management policies. The underwriters and their respective affiliates may hedge such exposure by entering into transactions which consist of either the purchase of credit default swaps or the creation of short positions in our securities or the securities of our affiliates, including potentially the common stock offered hereby. Any such short positions could adversely affect future trading prices of the common stock offered hereby. The underwriters and certain of their respective affiliates may also communicate independent investment recommendations, market color or trading ideas and/or publish or express independent research views in respect of such securities or instruments and may at any time hold, or recommend to clients that they acquire, long and/or short positions in such securities and instruments.

Disclaimers About Non-U.S. Jurisdictions

Australia

This prospectus supplement is not a disclosure document for the purposes of Australia's Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) of Australia, or Corporations Act, has not been lodged with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission and is only directed to the categories of exempt persons set out below. Accordingly, if you receive this prospectus supplement in Australia:

A. You confirm and warrant that you are either:

§ "sophisticated investor" under section 708(8)(a) or (b) of the Corporations Act;

Table of Contents

§
a "sophisticated investor" under section 708(8)(c) or (d) of the Corporations Act and that you have provided an accountant's certificate to the company which complies with the requirements of section 708(8)(c)(i) or (ii) of the Corporations Act and related regulations before the offer has been made;

§
"professional investor" within the meaning of section 708(11)(a) or (b) of the Corporations Act.

To the extent that you are unable to confirm or warrant that you are an exempt sophisticated investor or professional investor under the Corporations Act, any offer made to you under this prospectus supplement is void and incapable of acceptance.

B.
You warrant and agree that you will not offer any of the shares issued to you pursuant to this prospectus supplement for resale in Australia within 12 months of those shares being issued unless any such resale offer is exempt from the requirement to issue a disclosure document under section 708 of the Corporations Act.

Canada

The shares of our common stock may be sold only to purchasers purchasing, or deemed to be purchasing, as principal that are accredited investors, as defined in National Instrument 45-106 Prospectus Exemptions or subsection 73.3(1) of the Securities Act (Ontario), and are permitted clients, as defined in National Instrument 31-103 Registration Requirements, Exemptions and Ongoing Registrant Obligations. Any resale of the shares of our common stock must be made in accordance with an exemption from, or in a transaction not subject to, the prospectus requirements of applicable securities laws.

Securities legislation in certain provinces or territories of Canada may provide a purchaser with remedies for rescission or damages if this prospectus supplement (including any amendment thereto) contains a misrepresentation, provided that the remedies for rescission or damages are exercised by the purchaser within the time limit prescribed by the securities legislation of the purchaser's province or territory. The purchaser should refer to any applicable provisions of the securities legislation of the purchaser's province or territory for particulars of these rights or consult with a legal advisor.

Pursuant to section 3A.3 (or, in the case of securities issued or guaranteed by the government of a non-Canadian jurisdiction, section 3A.4) of National Instrument 33-105 Underwriting Conflicts (NI 33-105), the underwriters are not required to comply with the disclosure requirements of NI 33-105 regarding underwriter conflicts of interest in connection with this offering.

European Economic Area

In relation to each member state of the European Economic Area which has implemented the Prospectus Directive, each, a Relevant Member State, with effect from and including the date on which the Prospectus Directive is implemented in that Relevant Member State, which is referred to as the Relevant Implementation Date, no offer of any securities which are the subject of the offering contemplated by this prospectus supplement has been or will be made to the public in that Relevant Member State other than any offer where a prospectus has been or will be published in relation to such securities that has been approved by the competent authority in that Relevant Member State or, where appropriate, approved in another Relevant Member State and notified to the relevant competent authority in that Relevant Member State in accordance with the Prospectus Directive, except that with effect from and including the Relevant Implementation Date, an offer of such securities may be made to the public in that Relevant Member State:

- a) to any legal entity which is a "qualified investor" as defined in the Prospectus Directive;
- b) to fewer than 100 or, if the Relevant Member State has implemented the relevant provision of the 2010 PD Amending Directive, 150, natural or legal persons (other than qualified investors as defined in the Prospectus Directive), as permitted under the Prospectus Directive, subject to obtaining the prior consent of the representatives of the underwriters for any such offer; or

Table of Contents

c) to any other circumstances falling within Article 3(2) of the Prospectus Directive,

provided that no such offer of securities shall require the Company or any of the underwriters to publish a prospectus pursuant to Article 3 of the Prospectus Directive or supplement a prospectus pursuant to Article 16 of the Prospectus Directive.

For the purposes of this provision, the expression an "offer to the public" in relation to any securities in any Relevant Member State means the communication in any form and by any means of sufficient information on the terms of the offer and the securities to be offered so as to enable an investor to decide to purchase or subscribe the securities, as the same may be varied in that Relevant Member State by any measure implementing the Prospectus Directive in that Relevant Member State and the expression "Prospectus Directive" means Directive 2003/71/EC (and amendments thereto, including the 2010 PD Amending Directive, to the extent implemented in the Relevant Member State), and includes any relevant implementing measure in the Relevant Member State and the expression "2010 PD Amending Directive" means Directive 2010/73/EU.

Hong Kong

No securities have been offered or sold, and no securities may be offered or sold, in Hong Kong, by means of any document, other than to persons whose ordinary business is to buy or sell shares or debentures, whether as principal or agent; or to "professional investors" as defined in the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap. 571) of Hong Kong and any rules made under that Ordinance; or in other circumstances which do not result in the document being a "prospectus" as defined in the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32) of Hong Kong or which do not constitute an offer to the public within the meaning of the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32) of Hong Kong. No document, invitation or advertisement relating to the securities has been issued or may be issued or may be in the possession of any person for the purpose of issue (in each case whether in Hong Kong or elsewhere), which is directed at, or the contents of which are likely to be accessed or read by, the public of Hong Kong (except if permitted under the securities laws of Hong Kong) other than with respect to securities which are or are intended to be disposed of only to persons outside Hong Kong or only to "professional investors" as defined in the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap. 571) of Hong Kong and any rules made under that Ordinance.

This prospectus supplement has not been registered with the Registrar of Companies in Hong Kong. Accordingly, this prospectus supplement may not be issued, circulated or distributed in Hong Kong, and the securities may not be offered for subscription to members of the public in Hong Kong. Each person acquiring the securities will be required, and is deemed by the acquisition of the securities, to confirm that he is aware of the restriction on offers of the securities described in this prospectus supplement and the relevant offering documents and that he is not acquiring, and has not been offered any securities in circumstances that contravene any such restrictions.

Israel

In the State of Israel this prospectus supplement shall not be regarded as an offer to the public to purchase shares of common stock under the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968, which requires a prospectus to be published and authorized by the Israel Securities Authority, if it complies with certain provisions of Section 15 of the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968, including, inter alia, if: (i) the offer is made, distributed or directed to not more than 35 investors, subject to certain conditions (the "Addressed Investors"); or (ii) the offer is made, distributed or directed to certain qualified investors defined in the First Addendum of the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968, subject to certain conditions (the "Qualified Investors"). The Qualified Investors shall not be taken into account in the count of the Addressed Investors and may be offered to purchase securities in addition to the 35 Addressed Investors. The Company has not and will not take any action that would require it to publish a prospectus in accordance with and subject to the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968. The Company and the underwriters have not and will not distribute

Table of Contents

this prospectus supplement or make, distribute or direct an offer to subscribe for our common stock to any person within the State of Israel, other than to Qualified Investors and up to 35 Addressed Investors.

Qualified Investors may have to submit written evidence that they meet the definitions set out in of the First Addendum to the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968. In particular, we may request, as a condition to be offered common stock, that Qualified Investors will each represent, warrant and certify to us and/or to anyone acting on our behalf: (i) that it is an investor falling within one of the categories listed in the First Addendum to the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968; (ii) which of the categories listed in the First Addendum to the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968 regarding Qualified Investors is applicable to it; (iii) that it will abide by all provisions set forth in the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968 and the regulations promulgated thereunder in connection with the offer to be issued common stock; (iv) that the shares of common stock that it will be issued are, subject to exemptions available under the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968: (a) for its own account; (b) for investment purposes only; and (c) not issued with a view to resale within the State of Israel, other than in accordance with the provisions of the Israeli Securities Law, 5728-1968; and (v) that it is willing to provide further evidence of its Qualified Investor status. Addressed Investors may have to submit written evidence in respect of their identity and may have to sign and submit a declaration containing, inter alia, the Addressed Investor's name, address and passport number or Israeli identification number.

Japan

The offering has not been and will not be registered under the Financial Instruments and Exchange Law of Japan (Law No. 25 of 1948 of Japan, as amended), or FIEL, and the underwriters will not offer or sell any securities, directly or indirectly, in Japan or to, or for the benefit of, any resident of Japan (which term as used herein means, unless otherwise provided herein, any person resident in Japan, including any corporation or other entity organized under the laws of Japan), or to others for re-offering or resale, directly or indirectly, in Japan or to a resident of Japan, except pursuant to an exemption from the registration requirements of, and otherwise in compliance with, the FIEL and any other applicable laws, regulations and ministerial guidelines of Japan.

Singapore

This prospectus supplement has not been and will not be lodged or registered with the Monetary Authority of Singapore. Accordingly, this prospectus supplement and any other document or material in connection with the offer or sale, or the invitation for subscription or purchase of the securities may not be issued, circulated or distributed, nor may the securities be offered or sold, or be made the subject of an invitation for subscription or purchase, whether directly or indirectly, to the public or any member of the public in Singapore other than (i) to an institutional investor under Section 274 of the Securities and Futures Act, Chapter 289 of Singapore, or the SFA, (ii) to a relevant person as defined under Section 275(2), or any person pursuant to Section 275(1A) of the SFA, and in accordance with the conditions, specified in Section 275 of the SFA, or (iii) otherwise pursuant to, and in accordance with the conditions of any other applicable provision of the SFA. Where the securities are subscribed or purchased under Section 275 of the SFA by a relevant person which is:

- a) a corporation (which is not an accredited investor as defined under Section 4A of the SFA) the sole business of which is to hold investments and the entire share capital of which is owned by one or more individuals, each of whom is an accredited investor; or
- b) a trust (where the trustee is not an accredited investor) whose sole purpose is to hold investments and each beneficiary is an accredited investor, shares, debentures and units of shares and debentures of that corporation or the beneficiaries' rights and interest in that trust shall not be transferable for six

Table of Contents

months after that corporation or that trust has acquired the Offer Shares under Section 275 of the SFA except:

- i. to an institutional investor under Section 274 of the SFA or to a relevant person defined in Section 275(2) of the SFA, or to any person pursuant to an offer that is made on terms that such shares, debentures and units of shares and debentures of that corporation or such rights and interest in that trust are acquired at a consideration of not less than \$200,000 (or its equivalent in a foreign currency) for each transaction, whether such amount is to be paid for in cash or by exchange of securities or other assets, and further for corporations, in accordance with the conditions, specified in Section 275 of the SFA;
- ii. where no consideration is given for the transfer; or
- iii. where the transfer is by operation of law.

Switzerland

The securities may not be publicly offered in Switzerland and will not be listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange, or SIX, or on any other stock exchange or regulated trading facility in Switzerland. This prospectus supplement has been prepared without regard to the disclosure standards for issuance prospectuses under art. 652a or art. 1156 of the Swiss Code of Obligations or the disclosure standards for listing prospectuses under art. 27 ff. of the SIX Listing Rules or the listing rules of any other stock exchange or regulated trading facility in Switzerland. Neither this prospectus supplement nor any other offering or marketing material relating to the securities or the offering may be publicly distributed or otherwise made publicly available in Switzerland.

Neither this prospectus supplement nor any other offering or marketing material relating to the offering, the Company or the securities have been or will be filed with or approved by any Swiss regulatory authority. In particular, this prospectus supplement will not be filed with, and the offer of securities will not be supervised by, the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority and the offer of securities has not been and will not be authorized under the Swiss Federal Act on Collective Investment Schemes, or CISA. The investor protection afforded to acquirers of interests in collective investment schemes under the CISA does not extend to acquirers of securities.

United Kingdom

This prospectus supplement is only being distributed to, and is only directed at, persons in the United Kingdom that are qualified investors within the meaning of Article 2(1)(e) of the Prospectus Directive that are also (i) investment professionals falling within Article 19(5) of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Financial Promotion) Order 2005, as amended, which is referred to as the Order, and/or (ii) high net worth entities falling within Article 49(2)(a) to (d) of the Order and other persons to whom it may lawfully be communicated, each such person being referred to as a relevant person.

This prospectus supplement and its contents are confidential and should not be distributed, published or reproduced (in whole or in part) or disclosed by recipients to any other persons in the United Kingdom. Any person in the United Kingdom that is not a relevant person should not act or rely on this document or any of its contents.

Table of Contents

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the shares of common stock offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Cooley LLP, Reston, Virginia. Certain legal matters in connection with this offering will be passed upon for the underwriters by Latham & Watkins LLP.

EXPERTS

The financial statements incorporated in this prospectus supplement by reference to the Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 have been so incorporated in reliance on the report of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, given on the authority of said firm as experts in auditing and accounting.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. Our SEC filings are available to the public over the Internet at the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>. Copies of certain information filed by us with the SEC are also available on our website at <http://www.aclaristx.com>. Our website is not a part of this prospectus supplement and is not incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement. You may also read and copy any document we file with the SEC at the SEC's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the operation of the Public Reference Room.

This prospectus supplement is part of a registration statement that we filed with the SEC. The registration statement contains more information than this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus regarding us and the securities, including certain exhibits and schedules. You can obtain a copy of the registration statement from the SEC at the address listed above or from the SEC's internet site.

Table of Contents

INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus much of the information we file with the SEC, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those publicly available documents. The information that we incorporate by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus is considered to be part of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. Because we are incorporating by reference future filings with the SEC, this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus is continually updated and those future filings may modify or supersede some of the information included or incorporated in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. This means that you must look at all of the SEC filings that we incorporate by reference to determine if any of the statements in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or any document previously incorporated by reference have been modified or superseded. This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus incorporate by reference the documents listed below (File No. 001-37581) and any future filings we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act (in each case, other than those documents or the portions of those documents not deemed to be filed) until the offering of the securities under the registration statement is terminated or completed:

- § our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, filed with the SEC on March 23, 2016 and amended on April 25, 2016;
- § our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on May 11, 2016, August 11, 2016 and November 3, 2016;
- § our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on March 30, 2016, May 27, 2016, June 2, 2016, June 29, 2016, August 4, 2016, September 13, 2016, November 2, 2016 and November 15, 2016, to the extent the information in such reports is filed and not furnished; and
- § the description of our common stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A, filed with the SEC on October 2, 2015, including any amendments or reports filed for the purposes of updating this description.

You may request a copy of these filings, at no cost, by writing or telephoning us at the following address or phone number:

Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc.
Attn: Kamil Ali-Jackson, Chief Legal Officer
101 Lindenwood Drive, Suite 400
Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355
(484) 324-7933

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS

\$300,000,000

**Common Stock
Preferred Stock
Debt Securities
Warrants**

From time to time, we may offer up to \$300,000,000 of any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. We may also offer securities as may be issuable upon conversion, redemption, repurchase, exchange or exercise of any securities registered hereunder, including any applicable antidilution provisions.

This prospectus provides a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we offer securities, we will provide specific terms of the securities offered in a supplement to this prospectus. We may also authorize one or more free writing prospectuses to be provided to you in connection with these offerings. The prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should carefully read this prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, as well as any documents incorporated by reference, before you invest in any of the securities being offered.

This prospectus may not be used to consummate a sale of any securities unless accompanied by a prospectus supplement.

Our common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol "ACRS." On October 28, 2016, the last reported sale price of our common stock was \$21.34 per share. The applicable prospectus supplement will contain information, where applicable, as to any other listing on the NASDAQ Global Select Market or any securities market or other exchange of the securities, if any, covered by the prospectus supplement.

We will sell these securities directly to investors, through agents designated from time to time or to or through underwriters or dealers, on a continuous or delayed basis. For additional information on the methods of sale, you should refer to the section entitled "Plan of Distribution" in this prospectus. If any agents or underwriters are involved in the sale of any securities with respect to which this prospectus is being delivered, the names of such agents or underwriters and any applicable fees, commissions, discounts or over-allotment options will be set forth in a prospectus supplement. The price to the public of such securities and the net proceeds we expect to receive from such sale will also be set forth in a prospectus supplement.

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. You should review carefully the risks and uncertainties described under the heading "Risk Factors" contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, and under similar headings in the other documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus as described on page 6 of this prospectus.

NEITHER THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION NOR ANY STATE SECURITIES COMMISSION HAS APPROVED OR DISAPPROVED OF THESE SECURITIES OR DETERMINED IF THIS PROSPECTUS IS TRUTHFUL OR COMPLETE. ANY REPRESENTATION TO THE CONTRARY IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE.

The date of this prospectus is November 14, 2016.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u> | ii |
| <u>SUMMARY</u> | 1 |
| <u>RISK FACTORS</u> | 6 |
| <u>SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u> | 7 |
| <u>RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES</u> | 9 |
| <u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u> | 10 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK</u> | 11 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES</u> | 17 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS</u> | 24 |
| <u>LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES</u> | 27 |
| <u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u> | 31 |
| <u>LEGAL MATTERS</u> | 33 |
| <u>EXPERTS</u> | 33 |
| <u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u> | 33 |
| <u>INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE</u> | 33 |

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is a part of a registration statement on Form S-3 that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, utilizing a "shelf" registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings up to a total aggregate offering price of \$300,000,000. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer.

Each time we sell securities under this prospectus, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. We may also authorize one or more free writing prospectuses to be provided to you that may contain material information relating to these offerings. The prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus or in any documents that we have incorporated by reference into this prospectus. You should read this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, together with the information incorporated herein by reference as described under the heading "Incorporation of Certain Information by Reference," before investing in any of the securities offered.

THIS PROSPECTUS MAY NOT BE USED TO CONSUMMATE A SALE OF SECURITIES UNLESS IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY A PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT.

Neither we, nor any agent, underwriter or dealer has authorized any person to give any information or to make any representation other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus prepared by or on behalf of us or to which we have referred you. This prospectus, any applicable supplement to this prospectus or any related free writing prospectus do not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy any securities other than the registered securities to which they relate, nor do this prospectus, any applicable supplement to this prospectus or any related free writing prospectus constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy securities in any jurisdiction to any person to whom it is unlawful to make such offer or solicitation in such jurisdiction.

You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus is accurate on any date subsequent to the date set forth on the front of the document or that any information we have incorporated by reference is correct on any date subsequent to the date of the document incorporated by reference, even though this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus is delivered, or securities are sold, on a later date.

This prospectus and the information incorporated herein by reference contains summaries of certain provisions contained in some of the documents described herein, but reference is made to the actual documents for complete information. All of the summaries are qualified in their entirety by the actual documents. Copies of some of the documents referred to herein have been filed, will be filed or will be incorporated by reference as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and you may obtain copies of those documents as described below under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information."

Table of Contents

SUMMARY

This summary highlights selected information from this prospectus and does not contain all of the information that you need to consider in making your investment decision. You should carefully read the entire prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, including the risks of investing in our securities discussed under the heading "Risk Factors" contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, and under similar headings in the other documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus. You should also carefully read the information incorporated by reference into this prospectus, including our financial statements, and the exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

Unless the context indicates otherwise, references in this prospectus to "Aclaris," "company," "we," "us" and "our" refer to Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc.

Company Overview

We are a clinical-stage specialty pharmaceutical company focused on identifying, developing and commercializing innovative and differentiated drugs to address significant unmet needs in dermatology. Our lead drug candidate, A-101 Topical Solution, is a proprietary high-concentration hydrogen peroxide topical solution that we are developing as a prescription treatment for seborrheic keratosis, or SK, a common non-malignant skin tumor. We have completed three Phase 2 clinical trials of A-101 in over 300 patients with SK. In these trials, following one or two applications of A-101, we observed clinically relevant and statistically significant improvements in clearing SK lesions on the face, trunk and extremities of the body. In the first quarter of 2016, we initiated two multi-center, double-blind Phase 3 clinical trials and one open label Phase 3 clinical trial of A-101 in patients with SK. We completed enrollment of the Phase 3 clinical trials of A-101 for SK in the third quarter of 2016 and expect to report the results in the fourth quarter of 2016. If the results of these trials are favorable, we plan to submit a New Drug Application, or NDA, for A-101 for the treatment of SK to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, in the first quarter of 2017 and a Marketing Authorization Application, or MAA, to the European Medicines Agency in mid-2017.

We also intend to develop A-101 as a prescription treatment for common warts, also known as verruca vulgaris, and A-102, a proprietary gel dosage form of hydrogen peroxide, as a prescription treatment for SK and common warts. We recently completed a Phase 2 clinical trial evaluating 40% and 45% concentrations of A-101 for the treatment of common warts. In this Phase 2 clinical trial, in which 90 patients completed an eight-week treatment period, we observed statistically significant improvements in the mean change in the Physician's Wart Assessment score and in complete clearance of common warts in patients treated with the 45% concentration of A-101 compared to placebo. Based on these results, we plan to continue the development of the 45% concentration of A-101 as a treatment for common warts.

We have also in-licensed the exclusive, worldwide rights to inhibitors of the Janus kinase, or JAK, family of enzymes, for specified dermatological conditions. We plan to develop these JAK inhibitors, ATI-50001 and ATI-50002, as potential treatments for hair loss associated with an autoimmune skin disease known as alopecia areata and potentially for other dermatological conditions, as well as other JAK inhibitor compounds. We submitted an investigational new drug application, or IND, to the FDA for ATI-50001 in October 2016 and intend to commence a proof-of-concept trial for this drug candidate in the first half of 2017. We intend to submit an IND to the FDA for ATI-50002 and to commence a proof-of-concept trial for this drug candidate in the first half of 2017. We also intend to in-license or acquire additional drug candidates for other dermatological conditions to build a fully integrated dermatology company.

Table of Contents

Corporate Information

We were incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware in July 2012. Our principal executive offices are located at 101 Lindenwood Drive, Suite 400, Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355. Our telephone number is (484) 324-7933. Our common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol "ACRS."

Our internet website address is www.aclaristx.com. The information contained on our website is not incorporated by reference into this prospectus, and you should not consider any information contained on, or that can be accessed through, our website as part of this prospectus or in deciding whether to purchase our securities.

"Aclaris", the Aclaris logo, and our other trademarks or service marks appearing in this prospectus are our property. This prospectus and the information incorporated herein by reference contains additional trade names, trademarks and service marks of others, which are the property of their respective owners.

Implications of Being an Emerging Growth Company

We qualify as an "emerging growth company" as defined in the Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act of 2012, or the JOBS Act. An emerging growth company may take advantage of relief from some of the reporting requirements and other burdens that are otherwise applicable generally to public companies. These provisions include:

being permitted to provide only two years of audited financial statements, in addition to any required unaudited interim financial statements, with correspondingly reduced "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" disclosure;

not being required to comply with the auditor attestation requirements in the assessment of our internal control over financial reporting;

not being required to comply with any requirement that may be adopted by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board regarding mandatory audit firm rotation or a supplement to the auditor's report providing additional information about the audit and the financial statements;

reduced disclosure obligations regarding executive compensation in our periodic reports, proxy statements and registration statements; and

not being required to hold a nonbinding advisory vote on executive compensation and stockholder approval of any golden parachute payments not previously approved.

We may take advantage of these reporting exemptions until we are no longer an emerging growth company. We will remain an emerging growth company until the earlier of (1) December 31, 2020, (2) the last day of the fiscal year in which we have total annual gross revenue of at least \$1.0 billion, (3) the last day of the fiscal year in which we are deemed to be a large accelerated filer, which means the market value of our common stock that is held by non-affiliates exceeds \$700 million as of the prior June 30th and (4) any date on which we have issued more than \$1.0 billion in non-convertible debt during the prior three-year period. We may choose to take advantage of some but not all of these reduced burdens. For example, we have taken advantage of the reduced reporting requirements with respect to disclosure regarding our executive compensation arrangements, have presented only two years of audited financial statements and only two years of related "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" disclosure in our public filings, and have taken advantage of the exemption from auditor attestation on the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting. To the extent that we take advantage of these reduced burdens, the information that we provide stockholders may be different than you might obtain from other public companies in which you hold equity interests.

Table of Contents

In addition, under the JOBS Act, emerging growth companies can delay adopting new or revised accounting standards until such time as those standards apply to private companies. We have irrevocably elected not to avail ourselves of this exemption from new or revised accounting standards and, therefore, we will be subject to the same new or revised accounting standards as other public companies that are not emerging growth companies.

The Securities We May Offer

We may offer shares of our common stock and preferred stock, various series of debt securities and warrants to purchase any of such securities, up to a total aggregate offering price of \$300,000,000 from time to time in one or more offerings under this prospectus, together with any applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, at prices and on terms to be determined by market conditions at the time of the relevant offering. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we offer a type or series of securities under this prospectus, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will describe the specific amounts, prices and other important terms of the securities, including, to the extent applicable:

designation or classification;

aggregate principal amount or aggregate offering price;

maturity;

original issue discount, if any;

rates and times of payment of interest or dividends, if any;

redemption, conversion, exchange or sinking fund terms, if any;

conversion or exchange prices or rates, if any, and, if applicable, any provisions for changes to or adjustments in the conversion or exchange prices or rates and in the securities or other property receivable upon conversion or exchange;

ranking;

restrictive covenants, if any;

voting or other rights, if any; and

important U.S. federal income tax considerations.

The prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus or in documents we have incorporated by reference. However, no prospectus supplement or free writing prospectus will offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of the effectiveness of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

This prospectus may not be used to consummate a sale of securities unless it is accompanied by a prospectus supplement.

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

We may sell the securities directly to investors or through underwriters, dealers or agents. We, and our underwriters or agents, reserve the right to accept or reject all or part of any proposed purchase of securities. If we do offer securities through underwriters or agents, we will include in the applicable prospectus supplement:

the names of those underwriters or agents;

applicable fees, discounts and commissions to be paid to them;

details regarding over-allotment options, if any; and

Table of Contents

the estimated net proceeds to us.

Common Stock. We may issue shares of our common stock from time to time. The holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote for each share held of record on all matters submitted to a vote of stockholders and do not have cumulative voting rights. Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any outstanding shares of preferred stock, the holders of our common stock are entitled to receive ratably such dividends as may be declared by our board of directors out of legally available funds. Upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of our common stock are entitled to share ratably in all assets remaining after payment of liabilities and the liquidation preferences of any then outstanding shares of preferred stock. Our common stock does not carry any preemptive rights enabling a holder to subscribe for, or receive shares of, any class of our common stock or any other securities convertible into shares of any class of our common stock, or any redemption rights.

Preferred Stock. We may issue shares of our preferred stock from time to time, in one or more series. Under our certificate of incorporation, our board of directors has the authority, without further action by the stockholders (unless such stockholder action is required by applicable law or the rules of any stock exchange or market on which our securities are then traded), to designate up to 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock in one or more series and to determine the designations, voting powers, preferences and rights of each series of the preferred stock, as well as the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, conversion rights, preemptive rights, terms of redemption or repurchase, liquidation preferences, sinking fund terms and the number of shares constituting any series or the designation of any series, any or all of which may be greater than the rights of the common stock. Any convertible preferred stock we may issue will be convertible into our common stock or exchangeable for our other securities. Conversion may be mandatory or at the holder's option and would be at prescribed conversion rates.

If we sell any series of preferred stock under this prospectus, we will fix the designations, voting powers, preferences and rights of such series of preferred stock, as well as the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, in the certificate of designation relating to that series. We will file as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from reports that we file with the SEC, the form of any certificate of designation that describes the terms of the series of preferred stock that we are offering before the issuance of the related series of preferred stock. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to the series of preferred stock being offered, as well as the complete certificate of designation that contains the terms of the applicable series of preferred stock.

Debt Securities. We may issue debt securities from time to time, in one or more series, as either senior or subordinated debt or as senior or subordinated convertible debt. The senior debt securities will rank equally with any other unsecured and unsubordinated debt. The subordinated debt securities will be subordinate and junior in right of payment, to the extent and in the manner described in the instrument governing the debt, to all of our senior indebtedness. Convertible debt securities will be convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or preferred stock. Conversion may be mandatory or at the holder's option and would be at prescribed conversion rates.

The debt securities will be issued under one or more documents called indentures, which are contracts between us and a national banking association or other eligible party, as trustee. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the debt securities. We urge you, however, to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to the series of debt securities being offered, as well as the complete indentures that contain the terms of the debt securities. A form of indenture has been filed as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and supplemental indentures and forms of debt securities containing the terms of the debt securities being offered will be filed as

Table of Contents

exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part or will be incorporated by reference from reports that we file with the SEC.

Warrants. We may issue warrants for the purchase of common stock, preferred stock and/or debt securities in one or more series. We may issue warrants independently or together with common stock, preferred stock and/or debt securities, and the warrants may be attached to or separate from these securities. In this prospectus, we have summarized certain general features of the warrants. We urge you, however, to read the applicable prospectus supplement (and any free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) related to the particular series of warrants being offered, as well as the complete warrant agreements and warrant certificates that contain the terms of the warrants. Forms of the warrant agreements and forms of warrant certificates containing the terms of the warrants being offered have been filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and supplemental warrant agreements and forms of warrant certificates will be filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part or will be incorporated by reference from reports that we file with the SEC.

We will evidence each series of warrants by warrant certificates that we will issue. Warrants may be issued under an applicable warrant agreement that we enter into with a warrant agent. We will indicate the name and address of the warrant agent, if applicable, in the prospectus supplement relating to the particular series of warrants being offered.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. You should carefully review the risks and uncertainties described under the heading "Risk Factors" contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, and under similar headings in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2016, as updated by our annual, quarterly and other reports and documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus, before deciding whether to purchase any of the securities being registered pursuant to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. Each of the risk factors could adversely affect our business, operating results and financial condition, as well as adversely affect the value of an investment in our securities, and the occurrence of any of these risks might cause you to lose all or part of your investment. Additional risks not presently known to us or that we currently believe are immaterial may also significantly impair our business operations.

Table of Contents

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference contain forward-looking statements. These are based on our management's current beliefs, expectations and assumptions about future events, conditions and results and on information currently available to us. Discussions containing these forward-looking statements may be found, among other places, in the Sections entitled "Business," "Risk Factors" and "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" incorporated by reference from our most recent Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q, as well as any amendments thereto, filed with the SEC.

Any statements in this prospectus, or incorporated herein, about our expectations, beliefs, plans, objectives, assumptions or future events or performance are not historical facts and are forward-looking statements. Within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act, these forward-looking statements include statements regarding:

our plans to develop and commercialize our drug candidates;

the timing of our planned clinical trials of A-101 in patients with SK and our other drug candidates;

the timing of our NDA and MAA filings for A-101 for the treatment of SK and the timing of our IND application for ATI-50001 and ATI-50002;

the timing of and our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approvals for our drug candidates;

the clinical utility of our drug candidates;

our commercialization, marketing and manufacturing capabilities and strategy;

our expectations about the willingness of patients to pay out of pocket for procedures using our drug candidates;

our expectations about the willingness of dermatologists to use our drug candidates;

our intellectual property position;

our plans to in-license or acquire additional drug candidates for other dermatological conditions to build a fully integrated dermatology company; and

our estimates regarding future revenue, expenses and needs for additional financing.

In some cases, you can identify forward-looking statements by the words "may," "might," "can," "will," "to be," "could," "would," "should," "expect," "intend," "plan," "objective," "anticipate," "believe," "estimate," "predict," "project," "potential," "likely," "continue" and "ongoing," or the negative of these terms, or other comparable terminology intended to identify statements about the future, although not all forward-looking statements contain these words. These statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors that may cause our actual results, levels of activity, performance or achievements to be materially different from the information expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements.

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

You should refer to the "Risk Factors" section contained in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus, and under similar headings in the other documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus, for a discussion of important factors that may cause our actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied by our forward-looking statements. Given these risks, uncertainties and other factors, many of which are beyond our control, we cannot assure you that the forward-looking statements in this prospectus will prove to be accurate, and you

Table of Contents

should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. Furthermore, if our forward-looking statements prove to be inaccurate, the inaccuracy may be material. In light of the significant uncertainties in these forward-looking statements, you should not regard these statements as a representation or warranty by us or any other person that we will achieve our objectives and plans in any specified time frame, or at all.

Except as required by law, we assume no obligation to update these forward-looking statements publicly, or to revise any forward-looking statements to reflect events or developments occurring after the date of this prospectus, even if new information becomes available in the future.

Table of Contents

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

If we offer debt securities and/or preference equity securities under this prospectus, then we will, if required at that time, provide a ratio of earnings to fixed charges and/or ratio of combined fixed charges and preference dividends to earnings, respectively, in the applicable prospectus supplement for such offering.

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

We will retain broad discretion over the use of the net proceeds from the sale of the securities offered hereby. Except as described in any applicable prospectus supplement or in any free writing prospectuses that we may authorize to be provided to you in connection with a specific offering, we currently intend to use the net proceeds from the sale of the securities offered hereby, if any, for working capital, capital expenditures and general corporate purposes. We may also use a portion of the net proceeds to invest in or acquire businesses or technologies that we believe are complementary to our own, although we have no current plans, commitments or agreements with respect to any acquisitions as of the date of this prospectus. We will set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement or free writing prospectus our intended use for the net proceeds received from the sale of any securities sold pursuant to the prospectus supplement or free writing prospectus. Pending these uses, we plan to invest these net proceeds in short-term, interest bearing obligations, certificates of deposit or direct or guaranteed obligations of the United States.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following description of our capital stock and provisions of our amended and restated certificate of incorporation and amended and restated bylaws are summaries. You should also refer to the amended and restated certificate of incorporation and the amended and restated bylaws, which are filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is part.

General

Under our amended and restated certificate of incorporation we are authorized to issue up to 100,000,000 shares of common stock, \$0.00001 par value per share, and 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock, \$0.00001 par value per share, all of which shares of preferred stock are undesignated. Our board of directors may establish the rights and preferences of the preferred stock from time to time. As of June 30, 2016, we had outstanding 21,403,005 shares of common stock.

Common Stock

Voting Rights

Each holder of our common stock is entitled to one vote for each share on all matters submitted to a vote of the stockholders, including the election of directors. Under our amended and restated certificate of incorporation and amended and restated bylaws, our stockholders do not have cumulative voting rights. Because of this, the holders of a majority of the shares of common stock entitled to vote in any election of directors can elect all of the directors standing for election, if they should so choose.

Dividends

Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any then-outstanding preferred stock, holders of common stock are entitled to receive ratably those dividends, if any, as may be declared from time to time by the board of directors out of legally available funds.

Liquidation

In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of common stock will be entitled to share ratably in the net assets legally available for distribution to stockholders after the payment of all of our debts and other liabilities and the satisfaction of any liquidation preference granted to the holders of any then-outstanding shares of preferred stock.

Rights and Preferences

Holders of common stock have no preemptive, conversion or subscription rights and there are no redemption or sinking fund provisions applicable to the common stock. The rights, preferences and privileges of the holders of common stock are subject to, and may be adversely affected by, the rights of the holders of shares of any series of preferred stock that we may designate in the future.

Preferred Stock

Pursuant to our amended and restated certificate of incorporation, our board of directors has the authority, without further action by the stockholders (unless such stockholder action is required by applicable law or stock exchange listing rules), to designate and issue up to 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock in one or more series, to establish from time to time the number of shares to be included in each such series, to fix the designations, powers, preferences, privileges and relative participating, optional or special rights and the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, conversion rights, voting rights, terms of redemption and liquidation preferences, any or all of which may be greater than the rights of the common stock, and to increase or

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

Table of Contents

decrease the number of shares of any such series, but not below the number of shares of such series then outstanding.

Our board of directors, without stockholder approval, can issue preferred stock with voting, conversion or other rights that could adversely affect the voting power and other rights of the holders of common stock. Preferred stock could be issued quickly with terms designed to delay or prevent a change in control of our company or make removal of management more difficult. Additionally, the issuance of preferred stock may have the effect of decreasing the market price of the common stock and may adversely affect the voting power of holders of common stock and reduce the likelihood that common stockholders will receive dividend payments and payments upon liquidation.

Our board of directors will fix the designations, voting powers, preferences and rights of the each series, as well as the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, of the preferred stock of each series that we offer under this prospectus and applicable prospectus supplements in the certificate of designation relating to that series. We will file as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from reports that we file with the SEC, the form of any certificate of designation that describes the terms of the series of preferred stock we are offering before the issuance of that series of preferred stock. This description will include:

the title and stated value;

the number of shares we are offering;

the liquidation preference per share;

the purchase price per share;

the dividend rate per share, dividend period and payment dates and method of calculation for dividends;

whether dividends will be cumulative or non-cumulative and, if cumulative, the date from which dividends will accumulate;

our right, if any, to defer payment of dividends and the maximum length of any such deferral period;

the procedures for any auction and remarketing, if any;

the provisions for a sinking fund, if any;

the provisions for redemption or repurchase, if applicable, and any restrictions on our ability to exercise those redemption and repurchase rights;

any listing of the preferred stock on any securities exchange or market;

whether the preferred stock will be convertible into our common stock or other securities of ours, including depositary shares and warrants, and, if applicable, the conversion period, the conversion price, or how it will be calculated, and under what circumstances it may be adjusted;

whether the preferred stock will be exchangeable into debt securities, and, if applicable, the exchange period, the exchange price, or how it will be calculated, and under what circumstances it may be adjusted;

voting rights, if any, of the preferred stock;

preemption rights, if any;

restrictions on transfer, sale or other assignment, if any;

whether interests in the preferred stock will be represented by depositary shares;

Table of Contents

a discussion of any material or special U.S. federal income tax considerations applicable to the preferred stock;

the relative ranking and preferences of the preferred stock as to dividend rights and rights if we liquidate, dissolve or wind up our affairs;

any limitations on issuances of any class or series of preferred stock ranking senior to or on a parity with the series of preferred stock being issued as to dividend rights and rights if we liquidate, dissolve or wind up our affairs; and

any other specific terms, rights, preferences, privileges, qualifications or restrictions of the preferred stock.

The Delaware General Corporation Law, the state of our incorporation, provides that the holders of preferred stock will have the right to vote separately as a class (or, in some cases, as a series) on an amendment to our certificate of incorporation if the amendment would change the par value or, unless the certificate of incorporation provided otherwise, the number of authorized shares of the class or change the powers, preferences or special rights of the class or series so as to adversely affect the class or series, as the case may be. This right is in addition to any voting rights that may be provided for in the applicable certificate of designation.

Registration Rights

We and certain holders of shares of our common stock have entered into an investors' rights agreement. The registration rights provisions of this agreement provide those holders with demand, piggyback and Form S-3 registration rights with respect to the shares of common stock currently held by them.

Demand Registration Rights

The holders of at least a majority of the outstanding shares issued upon conversion of our convertible preferred stock in the aggregate have the right to demand that we file up to a total of two registration statements, as long as the anticipated aggregate offering price, net of underwriting discounts and commissions, would exceed \$5.0 million. These registration rights are subject to specified conditions and limitations, including the right of the underwriters, if any, to limit the number of shares included in any such registration under specified circumstances. Upon such a request, we are required to effect the registration as soon as practicable, but in any event no later than 90 days after the receipt of such request. An aggregate of approximately 5.4 million shares of common stock are entitled to these demand registration rights.

Piggyback Registration Rights

If we propose to register any of our securities under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, either for our own account or for the account of other stockholders, the holders of shares of common stock that have been issued upon conversion of our convertible preferred stock are entitled to notice of the registration and to include their shares of common stock in the registration statement. These piggyback registration rights are subject to specified conditions and limitations, including the right of the underwriters to limit the number of shares included in any such registration under specified circumstances. An aggregate of approximately 5.4 million shares of common stock are entitled to these piggyback registration rights. The holders of piggyback registration rights under our investors' rights agreement have waived these rights as they may apply to the filing of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part.

Table of Contents

Registration on Form S-3

The holders of shares of common stock that were issued upon conversion of our convertible preferred stock are entitled, upon the written request of holders of at least 30% of such shares, to have such shares registered by us on a Form S-3 registration statement at our expense. These Form S-3 registration rights are subject to other specified conditions and limitations, including the condition that the anticipated aggregate offering price, net of underwriting discounts and commissions, exceeds \$2.5 million. Upon receipt of this request, the holders of shares of common stock that were issued upon conversion of our convertible preferred stock will each be entitled to participate in this registration. An aggregate of approximately 5.4 million shares of common stock are entitled to these Form S-3 registration rights.

Expenses of Registration

We will pay all expenses relating to any demand, piggyback or Form S-3 registration, other than underwriting discounts and commissions, subject to specified conditions and limitations.

Termination of Registration Rights

The registration rights granted under the investors' rights agreement will terminate upon the earlier of the fifth anniversary of the closing of our initial public offering, a liquidation event or at such time as all shares of common stock issued upon conversion of preferred stock are eligible to be sold without restriction pursuant to Rule 144 under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, within any 90-day period.

Anti-Takeover Provisions

Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law

We are subject to Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law, which prohibits a Delaware corporation from engaging in any business combination with any interested stockholder for a period of three years after the date that such stockholder became an interested stockholder, with the following exceptions:

before such date, the board of directors of the corporation approved either the business combination or the transaction that resulted in the stockholder becoming an interested stockholder;

upon completion of the transaction that resulted in the stockholder becoming an interested stockholder, the interested stockholder owned at least 85% of the voting stock of the corporation outstanding at the time the transaction began, excluding for purposes of determining the voting stock outstanding, but not the outstanding voting stock owned by the interested stockholder, those shares owned (i) by persons who are directors and also officers and (ii) employee stock plans in which employee participants do not have the right to determine confidentially whether shares held subject to the plan will be tendered in a tender or exchange offer; or

on or after such date, the business combination is approved by the board of directors and authorized at an annual or special meeting of the stockholders, and not by written consent, by the affirmative vote of at least 66²/₃% of the outstanding voting stock that is not owned by the interested stockholder.

In general, Section 203 defines a "business combination" to include the following:

any merger or consolidation involving the corporation and the interested stockholder;

Table of Contents

any sale, transfer, pledge or other disposition of 10% or more of the assets of the corporation involving the interested stockholder;

subject to certain exceptions, any transaction that results in the issuance or transfer by the corporation of any stock of the corporation to the interested stockholder;

any transaction involving the corporation that has the effect of increasing the proportionate share of the stock or any class or series of the corporation beneficially owned by the interested stockholder; or

the receipt by the interested stockholder of the benefit of any loans, advances, guarantees, pledges or other financial benefits by or through the corporation.

In general, Section 203 defines an "interested stockholder" as an entity or person who, together with the person's affiliates and associates, beneficially owns, or within three years prior to the time of determination of interested stockholder status did own, 15% or more of the outstanding voting stock of the corporation.

Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws

Our amended and restated certificate of incorporation provides for our board of directors to be divided into three classes with staggered three-year terms. Only one class of directors will be elected at each annual meeting of our stockholders, with the other classes continuing for the remainder of their respective three-year terms. Because our stockholders do not have cumulative voting rights, stockholders holding a majority of the shares of common stock outstanding will be able to elect all of our directors. Our amended and restated certificate of incorporation and our amended and restated bylaws also provide that directors may be removed by the stockholders only for cause upon the vote of 66²/₃% or more of our outstanding common stock. Furthermore, the authorized number of directors may be changed only by resolution of the board of directors, and vacancies and newly created directorships on the board of directors may, except as otherwise required by law or determined by the board, only be filled by a majority vote of the directors then serving on the board, even though less than a quorum.

Our amended and restated certificate of incorporation and amended and restated bylaws also provide that all stockholder actions must be effected at a duly called meeting of stockholders and will eliminate the right of stockholders to act by written consent without a meeting. Our amended and restated bylaws also provide that only our chairman of the board, chief executive officer or the board of directors pursuant to a resolution adopted by a majority of the total number of authorized directors may call a special meeting of stockholders.

Our amended and restated bylaws also provide that stockholders seeking to present proposals before a meeting of stockholders or to nominate candidates for election as directors at a meeting of stockholders must provide timely advance notice in writing, and specify requirements as to the form and content of a stockholder's notice.

Our amended and restated certificate of incorporation and amended and restated bylaws provide that the stockholders cannot amend many of the provisions described above except by a vote of 66²/₃% or more of our outstanding common stock.

The combination of these provisions make it more difficult for our existing stockholders to replace our board of directors as well as for another party to obtain control of us by replacing our board of directors. Since our board of directors has the power to retain and discharge our officers, these provisions also make it more difficult for existing stockholders or another party to effect a change in management. In addition, the authorization of undesignated preferred stock makes it possible for our

Table of Contents

board of directors to issue preferred stock with voting or other rights or preferences that could impede the success of any attempt to change our control.

These provisions are intended to enhance the likelihood of continued stability in the composition of our board of directors and its policies and to discourage coercive takeover practices and inadequate takeover bids. These provisions are also designed to reduce our vulnerability to hostile takeovers and to discourage certain tactics that may be used in proxy fights. However, such provisions could have the effect of discouraging others from making tender offers for our shares and may have the effect of delaying changes in our control or management. As a consequence, these provisions may also inhibit fluctuations in the market price of our stock that could result from actual or rumored takeover attempts. We believe that the benefits of these provisions, including increased protection of our potential ability to negotiate with the proponent of an unfriendly or unsolicited proposal to acquire or restructure our company, outweigh the disadvantages of discouraging takeover proposals, because negotiation of takeover proposals could result in an improvement of their terms.

Choice of Forum

Our amended and restated certificate of incorporation provides that the Court of Chancery of the State of Delaware will be the exclusive forum for:

any derivative action or proceeding brought on our behalf;

any action asserting a breach of fiduciary duty;

any action asserting a claim against us arising pursuant to the Delaware General Corporation Law, our amended and restated certificate of incorporation, or our amended and restated bylaws; or

any action asserting a claim against us that is governed by the internal affairs doctrine.

The enforceability of similar choice of forum provisions in other companies' certificates of incorporation has been challenged in legal proceedings, and it is possible that, in connection with any action, a court could find the choice of forum provisions contained in our amended and restated certificate of incorporation to be inapplicable or unenforceable in such action.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Broadridge Corporate Issuer Solutions, Inc. The transfer agent's address is 1717 Arch Street, Suite 1300, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103. The transfer agent for any series of preferred stock that we may offer under this prospectus will be named and described in the prospectus supplement for that series.

Listing on the NASDAQ Global Select Market

Our common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol "ACRS."

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

We may issue debt securities from time to time, in one or more series, as either senior or subordinated debt or as senior or subordinated convertible debt. While the terms we have summarized below will apply generally to any debt securities that we may offer under this prospectus, we will describe the particular terms of any debt securities that we may offer in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement. The terms of any debt securities offered under a prospectus supplement may differ from the terms described below. Unless the context requires otherwise, whenever we refer to the indenture, we also are referring to any supplemental indentures that specify the terms of a particular series of debt securities.

We will issue the debt securities under the indenture that we will enter into with the trustee named in the indenture. The indenture will be qualified under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, or the Trust Indenture Act. We have filed the form of indenture as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and supplemental indentures and forms of debt securities containing the terms of the debt securities being offered will be filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part or will be incorporated by reference from reports that we file with the SEC.

The following summary of material provisions of the debt securities and the indenture is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, all of the provisions of the indenture applicable to a particular series of debt securities. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplements and any related free writing prospectuses related to the debt securities that we may offer under this prospectus, as well as the complete indenture that contains the terms of the debt securities.

General

The indenture does not limit the amount of debt securities that we may issue. It provides that we may issue debt securities up to the principal amount that we may authorize and may be in any currency or currency unit that we may designate. Except for the limitations on consolidation, merger and sale of all or substantially all of our assets contained in the indenture, the terms of the indenture do not contain any covenants or other provisions designed to give holders of any debt securities protection against changes in our operations, financial condition or transactions involving us.

We may issue the debt securities issued under the indenture as "discount securities," which means they may be sold at a discount below their stated principal amount. These debt securities, as well as other debt securities that are not issued at a discount, may be issued with "original issue discount," or OID, for U.S. federal income tax purposes because of interest payment and other characteristics or terms of the debt securities. Material U.S. federal income tax considerations applicable to debt securities issued with OID will be described in more detail in any applicable prospectus supplement.

We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms of the series of debt securities being offered, including:

the title of the series of debt securities;

any limit upon the aggregate principal amount that may be issued;

the maturity date or dates;

the form of the debt securities of the series;

the applicability of any guarantees;

whether or not the debt securities will be secured or unsecured, and the terms of any secured debt;

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

Table of Contents

whether the debt securities rank as senior debt, senior subordinated debt, subordinated debt or any combination thereof, and the terms of any subordination;

if the price (expressed as a percentage of the aggregate principal amount thereof) at which such debt securities will be issued is a price other than the principal amount thereof, the portion of the principal amount thereof payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof, or if applicable, the portion of the principal amount of such debt securities that is convertible into another security or the method by which any such portion shall be determined;

the interest rate or rates, which may be fixed or variable, or the method for determining the rate and the date interest will begin to accrue, the dates interest will be payable and the regular record dates for interest payment dates or the method for determining such dates;

our right, if any, to defer payment of interest and the maximum length of any such deferral period;

if applicable, the date or dates after which, or the period or periods during which, and the price or prices at which, we may, at our option, redeem the series of debt securities pursuant to any optional or provisional redemption provisions and the terms of those redemption provisions;

the date or dates, if any, on which, and the price or prices at which we are obligated, pursuant to any mandatory sinking fund or analogous fund provisions or otherwise, to redeem, or at the holder's option to purchase, the series of debt securities and the currency or currency unit in which the debt securities are payable;

the denominations in which we will issue the series of debt securities, if other than denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof;

any and all terms, if applicable, relating to any auction or remarketing of the debt securities of that series and any security for our obligations with respect to such debt securities and any other terms which may be advisable in connection with the marketing of debt securities of that series;

whether the debt securities of the series shall be issued in whole or in part in the form of a global security or securities; the terms and conditions, if any, upon which such global security or securities may be exchanged in whole or in part for other individual securities; and the depositary for such global security or securities;

if applicable, the provisions relating to conversion or exchange of any debt securities of the series and the terms and conditions upon which such debt securities will be so convertible or exchangeable, including the conversion or exchange price, as applicable, or how it will be calculated and may be adjusted, any mandatory or optional (at our option or the holders' option) conversion or exchange features, the applicable conversion or exchange period and the manner of settlement for any conversion or exchange;

if other than the full principal amount thereof, the portion of the principal amount of debt securities of the series which shall be payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof;

additions to or changes in the covenants applicable to the particular debt securities being issued, including, among others, the consolidation, merger or sale covenant;

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

additions to or changes in the events of default with respect to the securities and any change in the right of the trustee or the holders to declare the principal, premium, if any, and interest, if any, with respect to such securities to be due and payable;

additions to or changes in or deletions of the provisions relating to covenant defeasance and legal defeasance;

Table of Contents

additions to or changes in the provisions relating to satisfaction and discharge of the indenture;

additions to or changes in the provisions relating to the modification of the indenture both with and without the consent of holders of debt securities issued under the indenture;

the currency of payment of debt securities if other than U.S. dollars and the manner of determining the equivalent amount in U.S. dollars;

whether interest will be payable in cash or additional debt securities at our or the holders' option and the terms and conditions upon which the election may be made;

the terms and conditions, if any, upon which we will pay amounts in addition to the stated interest, premium, if any, and principal amounts of the debt securities of the series to any holder that is not a "United States person" for federal tax purposes;

any restrictions on transfer, sale or assignment of the debt securities of the series; and

any other specific terms, preferences, rights or limitations of, or restrictions on, the debt securities, any other additions or changes in the provisions of the indenture, and any terms that may be required by us or advisable under applicable laws or regulations.

Conversion or Exchange Rights

We will set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms on which a series of debt securities may be convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or our other securities. We will include provisions as to settlement upon conversion or exchange and whether conversion or exchange is mandatory, at the option of the holder or at our option. We may include provisions pursuant to which the number of shares of our common stock or our other securities that the holders of the series of debt securities receive would be subject to adjustment.

Consolidation, Merger or Sale

Unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, the indenture will not contain any covenant that restricts our ability to merge or consolidate, or sell, convey, transfer or otherwise dispose of our assets as an entirety or substantially as an entirety. However, any successor to or acquirer of such assets (other than a subsidiary of ours) must assume all of our obligations under the indenture or the debt securities, as appropriate.

Events of Default under the Indenture

Unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, the following are events of default under the indenture with respect to any series of debt securities that we may issue:

if we fail to pay any installment of interest on any series of debt securities, as and when the same shall become due and payable, and such default continues for a period of 90 days; provided, however, that a valid extension of an interest payment period by us in accordance with the terms of any indenture supplemental thereto shall not constitute a default in the payment of interest for this purpose;

if we fail to pay the principal of, or premium, if any, on any series of debt securities as and when the same shall become due and payable whether at maturity, upon redemption, by declaration or otherwise, or in any payment required by any sinking

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

or analogous fund established with respect to such series; provided, however, that a valid extension of the maturity of such debt securities in accordance with the terms of any indenture supplemental thereto shall not constitute a default in the payment of principal or premium, if any;

Table of Contents

if we fail to observe or perform any other covenant or agreement contained in the debt securities or the indenture, other than a covenant specifically relating to another series of debt securities, and our failure continues for 90 days after we receive written notice of such failure, requiring the same to be remedied and stating that such is a notice of default thereunder, from the trustee or holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of the applicable series; and

if specified events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization occur.

If an event of default with respect to debt securities of any series occurs and is continuing, other than an event of default specified in the last bullet point above, the trustee or the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, by notice to us in writing, and to the trustee if notice is given by such holders, may declare the unpaid principal of, premium, if any, and accrued interest, if any, of such series of debt securities due and payable immediately. If an event of default specified in the last bullet point above occurs with respect to us, the principal amount of and accrued interest, if any, of each issue of debt securities then outstanding shall be due and payable without any notice or other action on the part of the trustee or any holder.

The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of an affected series may waive any default or event of default with respect to the series and its consequences, except defaults or events of default regarding payment of principal, premium, if any, or interest, unless we have cured the default or event of default in accordance with the indenture. Any waiver shall cure the default or event of default.

Subject to the terms of the indenture, if an event of default under an indenture shall occur and be continuing, the trustee will be under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under such indenture at the request or direction of any of the holders of the applicable series of debt securities, unless such holders have offered the trustee reasonable indemnity. The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee, or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee, with respect to the debt securities of that series, provided that:

the direction so given by the holder is not in conflict with any law or the applicable indenture; and

subject to its duties under the Trust Indenture Act, the trustee need not take any action that might involve it in personal liability or might be unduly prejudicial to the holders not involved in the proceeding.

A holder of the debt securities of any series will have the right to institute a proceeding under the indenture or to appoint a receiver or trustee, or to seek other remedies only if:

the holder has given written notice to the trustee of a continuing event of default with respect to that series;

the holders of at least 25% in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series have made written request,

such holders have offered to the trustee indemnity satisfactory to it against the costs, expenses and liabilities to be incurred by the trustee in compliance with the request; and

the trustee does not institute the proceeding, and does not receive from the holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series other conflicting directions within 90 days after the notice, request and offer.

Table of Contents

These limitations do not apply to a suit instituted by a holder of debt securities if we default in the payment of the principal, premium, if any, or interest on, the debt securities.

We will periodically file statements with the trustee regarding our compliance with specified covenants in the indenture.

Modification of Indenture; Waiver

Unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, we and the trustee may change an indenture without the consent of any holders with respect to specific matters:

to cure any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency in the indenture or in the debt securities of any series;

to comply with the provisions described above under "Description of Debt Securities Consolidation, Merger or Sale;"

to provide for uncertificated debt securities in addition to or in place of certificated debt securities;

to add to our covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions such new covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions for the benefit of the holders of all or any series of debt securities, to make the occurrence, or the occurrence and the continuance, of a default in any such additional covenants, restrictions, conditions or provisions an event of default or to surrender any right or power conferred upon us in the indenture;

to add to, delete from or revise the conditions, limitations, and restrictions on the authorized amount, terms, or purposes of issue, authentication and delivery of debt securities, as set forth in the indenture;

to make any change that does not adversely affect the interests of any holder of debt securities of any series in any material respect;

to provide for the issuance of and establish the form and terms and conditions of the debt securities of any series as provided above under "Description of Debt Securities General" to establish the form of any certifications required to be furnished pursuant to the terms of the indenture or any series of debt securities, or to add to the rights of the holders of any series of debt securities;

to evidence and provide for the acceptance of appointment under any indenture by a successor trustee; or

to comply with any requirements of the SEC in connection with the qualification of any indenture under the Trust Indenture Act.

In addition, under the indenture, the rights of holders of a series of debt securities may be changed by us and the trustee with the written consent of the holders of at least a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series that is affected. However, unless we provide otherwise in the prospectus supplement applicable to a particular series of debt securities, we and the trustee may make the following changes only with the consent of each holder of any outstanding debt securities affected:

extending the fixed maturity of any debt securities of any series;

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

reducing the principal amount, reducing the rate of or extending the time of payment of interest, or reducing any premium payable upon the redemption of any series of any debt securities; or

Table of Contents

reducing the percentage of debt securities, the holders of which are required to consent to any amendment, supplement, modification or waiver.

Discharge

The indenture provides that we can elect to be discharged from our obligations with respect to one or more series of debt securities, except for specified obligations, including obligations to:

provide for payment;

register the transfer or exchange of debt securities of the series;

replace stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities of the series;

pay principal of and premium and interest on any debt securities of the series;

maintain paying agencies;

hold monies for payment in trust;

recover excess money held by the trustee;

compensate and indemnify the trustee; and

appoint any successor trustee.

In order to exercise our rights to be discharged, we must deposit with the trustee money or government obligations sufficient to pay all the principal of, any premium, if any, and interest on, the debt securities of the series on the dates payments are due.

Form, Exchange and Transfer

We will issue the debt securities of each series only in fully registered form without coupons and, unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, in denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof. The indenture provides that we may issue debt securities of a series in temporary or permanent global form and as book-entry securities that will be deposited with, or on behalf of, The Depository Trust Company, or DTC, or another depository named by us and identified in the applicable prospectus supplement with respect to that series. To the extent the debt securities of a series are issued in global form and as book-entry, a description of terms relating to any book-entry securities will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement.

At the option of the holder, subject to the terms of the indenture and the limitations applicable to global securities described in the applicable prospectus supplement, the holder of the debt securities of any series can exchange the debt securities for other debt securities of the same series, in any authorized denomination and of like tenor and aggregate principal amount.

Subject to the terms of the indenture and the limitations applicable to global securities set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the debt securities may present the debt securities for exchange or for registration of transfer, duly endorsed or with the form of transfer endorsed thereon duly executed if so required by us or the security registrar, at the office of the security registrar or at the office of any transfer agent designated by us for this purpose. Unless otherwise provided in the debt securities that the holder presents for transfer or

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

exchange, we will impose no service charge for any registration of transfer or exchange, but we may require payment of any taxes or other governmental charges.

We will name in the applicable prospectus supplement the security registrar, and any transfer agent in addition to the security registrar, that we initially designate for any debt securities. We may at any time designate additional transfer agents or rescind the designation of any transfer agent or approve a

Table of Contents

change in the office through which any transfer agent acts, except that we will be required to maintain a transfer agent in each place of payment for the debt securities of each series.

If we elect to redeem the debt securities of any series, we will not be required to:

issue, register the transfer of, or exchange any debt securities of that series during a period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before the day of mailing of a notice of redemption of any debt securities that may be selected for redemption and ending at the close of business on the day of the mailing; or

register the transfer of or exchange of any debt securities so selected for redemption, in whole or in part, except the unredeemed portion of any debt securities we are redeeming in part.

Information Concerning the Trustee

The trustee, other than during the occurrence and continuance of an event of default under an indenture, undertakes to perform only those duties as are specifically set forth in the applicable indenture. Upon an event of default under an indenture, the trustee must use the same degree of care as a prudent person would exercise or use in the conduct of his or her own affairs. Subject to this provision, the trustee is under no obligation to exercise any of the powers given it by the indenture at the request of any holder of debt securities unless it is offered reasonable security and indemnity against the costs, expenses and liabilities that it might incur.

Payment and Paying Agents

Unless we otherwise indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will make payment of the interest on any debt securities on any interest payment date to the person in whose name the debt securities, or one or more predecessor securities, are registered at the close of business on the regular record date for the interest.

We will pay principal of and any premium and interest on the debt securities of a particular series at the office of the paying agents designated by us, except that unless we otherwise indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will make interest payments by check that we will mail to the holder or by wire transfer to certain holders. Unless we otherwise indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will designate the corporate trust office of the trustee as our sole paying agent for payments with respect to debt securities of each series. We will name in the applicable prospectus supplement any other paying agents that we initially designate for the debt securities of a particular series. We will maintain a paying agent in each place of payment for the debt securities of a particular series.

All money we pay to a paying agent or the trustee for the payment of the principal of or any premium or interest on any debt securities that remains unclaimed at the end of two years after such principal, premium or interest has become due and payable will be repaid to us, and the holder of the debt security thereafter may look only to us for payment thereof.

Governing Law

The indenture and the debt securities, and any claim, controversy or dispute arising under or related to the indenture or the debt securities, will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, except to the extent that the Trust Indenture Act is applicable.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

The following description, together with the additional information we may include in any applicable prospectus supplements and free writing prospectuses, summarizes the material terms and provisions of the warrants that we may offer under this prospectus, which may consist of warrants to purchase common stock, preferred stock or debt securities and may be issued in one or more series. Warrants may be issued independently or together with common stock, preferred stock or debt securities offered by any prospectus supplement, and may be attached to or separate from those securities. While the terms we have summarized below will apply generally to any warrants that we may offer under this prospectus, we will describe the particular terms of any series of warrants that we may offer in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement and any applicable free writing prospectus. The terms of any warrants offered under a prospectus supplement may differ from the terms described below. However, no prospectus supplement will fundamentally change the terms that are set forth in this prospectus or offer a security that is not registered and described in this prospectus at the time of its effectiveness.

We have filed forms of the warrant agreements as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. We will file as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, or will incorporate by reference from reports that we file with the SEC, the form of warrant agreement, if any, including a form of warrant certificate, that describes the terms of the particular series of warrants we are offering. The following summaries of material provisions of the warrants and the warrant agreements are subject to, and qualified in their entirety by reference to, all the provisions of the warrant agreement and warrant certificate applicable to the particular series of warrants that we may offer under this prospectus. We urge you to read the applicable prospectus supplements related to the particular series of warrants that we may offer under this prospectus, as well as any related free writing prospectuses, and the complete warrant agreements and warrant certificates that contain the terms of the warrants.

General

We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement the terms relating to a series of warrants being offered, including:

the title of such securities;

the offering price or prices and aggregate number of warrants offered;

the currency or currencies for which the warrants may be purchased;

if applicable, the designation and terms of the securities with which the warrants are issued and the number of warrants issued with each such security or each principal amount of such security;

if applicable, the date on and after which the warrants and the related securities will be separately transferable;

if applicable, the minimum or maximum amount of such warrants which may be exercised at any one time;

in the case of warrants to purchase debt securities, the principal amount of debt securities purchasable upon exercise of one warrant and the price at which, and currency in which, this principal amount of debt securities may be purchased upon such exercise;

in the case of warrants to purchase common stock or preferred stock, the number of shares of common stock or preferred stock, as the case may be, purchasable upon the exercise of one warrant and the price at which, and the currency in which, these shares may be purchased upon such exercise;

Table of Contents

the effect of any merger, consolidation, sale or other disposition of our business on the warrant agreements and the warrants;

the terms of any rights to redeem or call the warrants;

the terms of any rights to force the exercise of the warrants;

any provisions for changes to or adjustments in the exercise price or number of securities issuable upon exercise of the warrants;

the dates on which the right to exercise the warrants will commence and expire;

the manner in which the warrant agreements and warrants may be modified;

a discussion of any material or special U.S. federal income tax consequences of holding or exercising the warrants;

the terms of the securities issuable upon exercise of the warrants; and

any other specific terms, preferences, rights or limitations of or restrictions on the warrants.

Before exercising their warrants, holders of warrants will not have any of the rights of holders of the securities purchasable upon such exercise, including:

in the case of warrants to purchase debt securities, the right to receive payments of principal of, or premium, if any, or interest on, the debt securities purchasable upon exercise or to enforce covenants in the applicable indenture; or

in the case of warrants to purchase common stock or preferred stock, the right to receive dividends, if any, or, payments upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding up or to exercise voting rights, if any.

Exercise of Warrants

Each warrant will entitle the holder to purchase the securities that we specify in the applicable prospectus supplement at the exercise price that we describe in the applicable prospectus supplement. Unless we otherwise specify in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the warrants may exercise the warrants at any time up to the specified time on the expiration date that we set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. After the close of business on the expiration date, unexercised warrants will become void.

Unless we otherwise specify in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the warrants may exercise the warrants by delivering the warrant certificate representing the warrants to be exercised together with specified information, and paying the required amount to the warrant agent in immediately available funds, as provided in the applicable prospectus supplement. We will set forth on the reverse side of the warrant certificate and in the applicable prospectus supplement the information that the holder of the warrant will be required to deliver to the warrant agent in connection with the exercise of the warrant.

Upon receipt of the required payment and the warrant certificate properly completed and duly executed at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent or any other office indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will issue and deliver the securities purchasable upon such exercise. If fewer than all of the warrants represented by the warrant certificate are exercised, then we will issue a new warrant certificate for the remaining amount of warrants. If we so indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement, holders of the warrants may surrender securities

as all or part of the exercise price for warrants.

Table of Contents

Governing Law

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the warrants and warrant agreements, and any claim, controversy or dispute arising under or related to the warrants or warrant agreements, will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York.

Enforceability of Rights by Holders of Warrants

Each warrant agent will act solely as our agent under the applicable warrant agreement and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust with any holder of any warrant. A single bank or trust company may act as warrant agent for more than one issue of warrants. A warrant agent will have no duty or responsibility in case of any default by us under the applicable warrant agreement or warrant, including any duty or responsibility to initiate any proceedings at law or otherwise, or to make any demand upon us. Any holder of a warrant may, without the consent of the related warrant agent or the holder of any other warrant, enforce by appropriate legal action its right to exercise, and receive the securities purchasable upon exercise of, its warrants.

Table of Contents

LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES

We can issue securities in registered form or in the form of one or more global securities. We describe global securities in greater detail below. We refer to those persons who have securities registered in their own names on the books that we or any applicable trustee or depository maintain for this purpose as the "holders" of those securities. These persons are the legal holders of the securities. We refer to those persons who, indirectly through others, own beneficial interests in securities that are not registered in their own names, as "indirect holders" of those securities. As we discuss below, indirect holders are not legal holders, and investors in securities issued in book-entry form or in street name will be indirect holders.

Book-Entry Holders

We may issue securities in book-entry form only, as we will specify in the applicable prospectus supplement. This means securities may be represented by one or more global securities registered in the name of a financial institution that holds them as depository on behalf of other financial institutions that participate in the depository's book-entry system. These participating institutions, which are referred to as participants, in turn, hold beneficial interests in the securities on behalf of themselves or their customers.

Only the person in whose name a security is registered is recognized as the holder of that security. Global securities will be registered in the name of the depository or its participants. Consequently, for global securities, we will recognize only the depository as the holder of the securities, and we will make all payments on the securities to the depository. The depository passes along the payments it receives to its participants, which in turn pass the payments along to their customers who are the beneficial owners. The depository and its participants do so under agreements they have made with one another or with their customers; they are not obligated to do so under the terms of the securities.

As a result, investors in a global security will not own securities directly. Instead, they will own beneficial interests in a global security, through a bank, broker or other financial institution that participates in the depository's book-entry system or holds an interest through a participant. As long as the securities are issued in global form, investors will be indirect holders, and not legal holders, of the securities.

Street Name Holders

We may terminate a global security or issue securities that are not issued in global form. In these cases, investors may choose to hold their securities in their own names or in "street name." Securities held by an investor in street name would be registered in the name of a bank, broker or other financial institution that the investor chooses, and the investor would hold only a beneficial interest in those securities through an account he or she maintains at that institution.

For securities held in street name, we or any applicable trustee or depository will recognize only the intermediary banks, brokers and other financial institutions in whose names the securities are registered as the holders of those securities, and we or any such trustee or depository will make all payments on those securities to them. These institutions pass along the payments they receive to their customers who are the beneficial owners, but only because they agree to do so in their customer agreements or because they are legally required to do so. Investors who hold securities in street name will be indirect holders, not holders, of those securities.

Legal Holders

Our obligations, as well as the obligations of any applicable trustee or third party employed by us or a trustee, run only to the legal holders of the securities. We do not have obligations to investors who

Table of Contents

hold beneficial interests in global securities, in street name or by any other indirect means. This will be the case whether an investor chooses to be an indirect holder of a security or has no choice because we are issuing the securities only in global form.

For example, once we make a payment or give a notice to the holder, we have no further responsibility for the payment or notice even if that holder is required, under agreements with its participants or customers or by law, to pass it along to the indirect holders but does not do so. Similarly, we may want to obtain the approval of the holders to amend an indenture, to relieve us of the consequences of a default or of our obligation to comply with a particular provision of an indenture, or for other purposes. In such an event, we would seek approval only from the holders, and not the indirect holders, of the securities. Whether and how the legal holders contact the indirect holders is up to the legal holders.

Special Considerations for Indirect Holders

If you hold securities through a bank, broker or other financial institution, either in book-entry form because the securities are represented by one or more global securities or in street name, you should check with your own institution to find out:

how it handles securities payments and notices;

whether it imposes fees or charges;

how it would handle a request for the holders' consent, if ever required;

whether and how you can instruct it to send you securities registered in your own name so you can be a holder, if that is permitted in the future;

how it would exercise rights under the securities if there were a default or other event triggering the need for holders to act to protect their interests; and

if the securities are in book-entry form, how the depository's rules and procedures will affect these matters.

Global Securities

A global security is a security that represents one or any other number of individual securities held by a depository. Generally, all securities represented by the same global securities will have the same terms.

Each security issued in book-entry form will be represented by a global security that we issue to, deposit with and register in the name of a financial institution or its nominee that we select. The financial institution that we select for this purpose is called the depository. Unless we specify otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, The Depository Trust Company, New York, New York, known as DTC, will be the depository for all securities issued in book-entry form.

A global security may not be transferred to or registered in the name of anyone other than the depository, its nominee or a successor depository, unless special termination situations arise. We describe those situations below under " Special Situations When a Global Security Will Be Terminated." As a result of these arrangements, the depository, or its nominee, will be the sole registered owner and legal holder of all securities represented by a global security, and investors will be permitted to own only beneficial interests in a global security. Beneficial interests must be held by means of an account with a broker, bank or other financial institution that in turn has an account with the depository or with another institution that does. Thus, an investor whose security is represented by a global security will not be a legal holder of the security, but only an indirect holder of a beneficial interest in the global security.

Table of Contents

If the prospectus supplement for a particular security indicates that the security will be issued as a global security, then the security will be represented by a global security at all times unless and until the global security is terminated. If termination occurs, we may issue the securities through another book-entry clearing system or decide that the securities may no longer be held through any book-entry clearing system.

Special Considerations for Global Securities

As an indirect holder, an investor's rights relating to a global security will be governed by the account rules of the investor's financial institution and of the depositary, as well as general laws relating to securities transfers. We do not recognize an indirect holder as a holder of securities and instead deal only with the depositary that holds the global security.

If securities are issued only as global securities, an investor should be aware of the following:

an investor cannot cause the securities to be registered in his or her name, and cannot obtain non-global certificates for his or her interest in the securities, except in the special situations we describe below;

an investor will be an indirect holder and must look to his or her own bank or broker for payments on the securities and protection of his or her legal rights relating to the securities, as we describe above;

an investor may not be able to sell interests in the securities to some insurance companies and to other institutions that are required by law to own their securities in non-book-entry form;

an investor may not be able to pledge his or her interest in the global security in circumstances where certificates representing the securities must be delivered to the lender or other beneficiary of the pledge in order for the pledge to be effective;

the depositary's policies, which may change from time to time, will govern payments, transfers, exchanges and other matters relating to an investor's interest in the global security;

we and any applicable trustee have no responsibility for any aspect of the depositary's actions or for its records of ownership interests in the global security, nor will we or any applicable trustee supervise the depositary in any way;

the depositary may, and we understand that DTC will, require that those who purchase and sell interests in the global security within its book-entry system use immediately available funds, and your broker or bank may require you to do so as well; and

financial institutions that participate in the depositary's book-entry system, and through which an investor holds its interest in the global security, may also have their own policies affecting payments, notices and other matters relating to the securities.

There may be more than one financial intermediary in the chain of ownership for an investor. We do not monitor and are not responsible for the actions of any of those intermediaries.

Special Situations When a Global Security Will Be Terminated

In a few special situations described below, a global security will terminate and interests in it will be exchanged for physical certificates representing those interests. After that exchange, the choice of whether to hold securities directly or in street name will be up to the investor. Investors must consult their own banks or brokers to find out how to have their interests in securities transferred to their own names, so that they will be direct holders. We have described the rights of holders and street name investors above.

Table of Contents

A global security will terminate when the following special situations occur:

if the depositary notifies us that it is unwilling, unable or no longer qualified to continue as depositary for that global security and we do not appoint another institution to act as depositary within 90 days;

if we notify any applicable trustee that we wish to terminate that global security; or

if an event of default has occurred with regard to securities represented by that global security and has not been cured or waived.

The applicable prospectus supplement may also list additional situations for terminating a global security that would apply only to the particular series of securities covered by the prospectus supplement. When a global security terminates, the depositary, and neither we nor any applicable trustee, is responsible for deciding the names of the institutions that will be the initial direct holders.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities from time to time pursuant to underwritten public offerings, negotiated transactions, block trades or a combination of these methods. We may sell the securities to or through underwriters or dealers, through agents, or directly to one or more purchasers. We may distribute securities from time to time in one or more transactions:

at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed;

at market prices prevailing at the time of sale;

at prices related to such prevailing market prices; or

at negotiated prices.

We may also sell equity securities covered by this registration statement in an "at the market offering" as defined in Rule 415 under the Securities Act. Such offering may be made into an existing trading market for such securities in transactions at other than a fixed price, either:

on or through the facilities of the NASDAQ Global Select Market or any other securities exchange or quotation or trading service on which such securities may be listed, quoted or traded at the time of sale; and/or

other than on the NASDAQ Global Select Market or such other securities exchanges or quotation or trading services.

Such at the market offerings, if any, may be conducted by underwriters acting as principal or agent.

A prospectus supplement or supplements (and any related free writing prospectus that we may authorize to be provided to you) will describe the terms of the offering of the securities, including, to the extent applicable:

the name or names of any underwriters, dealers or agents, if any;

the purchase price of the securities and the proceeds we will receive from the sale;

any over-allotment options under which underwriters may purchase additional securities from us;

any agency fees or underwriting discounts and other items constituting agents' or underwriters' compensation;

any public offering price;

any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers; and

any securities exchange or market on which the securities may be listed.

Only underwriters named in the prospectus supplement are underwriters of the securities offered by the prospectus supplement.

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

If underwriters are used in the sale, they will acquire the securities for their own account and may resell the securities from time to time in one or more transactions at a fixed public offering price or at varying prices determined at the time of sale. The obligations of the underwriters to purchase the securities will be subject to the conditions set forth in the applicable underwriting agreement. We may offer the securities to the public through underwriting syndicates represented by managing underwriters or by underwriters without a syndicate. Subject to certain conditions, the underwriters will be obligated to purchase all of the securities offered by the prospectus supplement. Any public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers may change from time to time.

Table of Contents

We may use underwriters with whom we have a material relationship. We will describe in the prospectus supplement, naming the underwriter, the nature of any such relationship.

We may sell securities directly or through agents we designate from time to time. We will name any agent involved in the offering and sale of securities, and we will describe any commissions we will pay the agent in the prospectus supplement. Unless the prospectus supplement states otherwise, our agent will act on a best-efforts basis for the period of its appointment.

We may authorize agents or underwriters to solicit offers by certain types of institutional investors to purchase securities from us at the public offering price set forth in the prospectus supplement pursuant to delayed delivery contracts providing for payment and delivery on a specified date in the future. We will describe the conditions to these contracts and the commissions we must pay for solicitation of these contracts in the prospectus supplement.

We may provide agents and underwriters with indemnification against civil liabilities related to this offering, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or contribution with respect to payments that the agents or underwriters may make with respect to these liabilities. Agents and underwriters may engage in transactions with, or perform services for, us in the ordinary course of business.

All securities we offer, other than common stock, will be new issues of securities with no established trading market. Any underwriters may make a market in these securities, but will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue any market making at any time without notice. We cannot guarantee the liquidity of the trading markets for any securities.

Any underwriter may engage in overallotment, stabilizing transactions, short covering transactions and penalty bids. Overallotment involves sales in excess of the offering size, which create a short position. Stabilizing transactions permit bids to purchase the underlying security so long as the stabilizing bids do not exceed a specified maximum. Short covering transactions involve purchases of the securities in the open market after the distribution is completed to cover short positions. Penalty bids permit the underwriters to reclaim a selling concession from a dealer when the securities originally sold by the dealer are purchased in a stabilizing or covering transaction to cover short positions. Those activities may cause the price of the securities to be higher than it would otherwise be. If commenced, the underwriters may discontinue any of the activities at any time. These transactions may be effected on any exchange or over-the-counter market or otherwise.

Any underwriters who are qualified market makers on the NASDAQ Global Select Market may engage in passive market making transactions in the securities on the NASDAQ Global Select Market in accordance with Rule 103 of Regulation M, during the business day prior to the pricing of the offering, before the commencement of offers or sales of the securities. Passive market makers must comply with applicable volume and price limitations and must be identified as passive market makers. In general, a passive market maker must display its bid at a price not in excess of the highest independent bid for such security; if all independent bids are lowered below the passive market maker's bid, however, the passive market maker's bid must then be lowered when certain purchase limits are exceeded. Passive market making may stabilize the market price of the securities at a level above that which might otherwise prevail in the open market and, if commenced, may be discontinued at any time.

In compliance with guidelines of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, or FINRA, the maximum consideration or discount to be received by any FINRA member or independent broker dealer may not exceed 8% of the aggregate amount of the securities offered pursuant to this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

LEGAL MATTERS

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, certain legal matters in connection with the offering and the validity of the securities offered by this prospectus, and any supplement thereto, will be passed upon by Cooley LLP.

EXPERTS

The financial statements incorporated in this prospectus by reference to the Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 have been so incorporated in reliance on the report of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, given on the authority of said firm as experts in auditing and accounting.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

This prospectus is part of a registration statement we filed with the SEC. This prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement and the exhibits to the registration statement. For further information with respect to us and the securities we are offering under this prospectus, we refer you to the registration statement and the exhibits and schedules filed as a part of the registration statement. You should rely only on the information contained in this prospectus or incorporated by reference. We have not authorized anyone else to provide you with different information. We are not making an offer of these securities in any state where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front page of this prospectus, regardless of the time of delivery of this prospectus or any sale of the securities offered by this prospectus.

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy the registration statement, as well as any other document filed by us with the SEC, at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20549. You can also request copies of these documents by writing to the SEC and paying a fee for the copying cost. You may obtain information on the operation of the Public Reference Room by calling the SEC at (800) SEC-0330. The SEC maintains a website that contains reports, proxy statements and other information regarding issuers that file electronically with the SEC, including Aclaris. The address of the SEC website is www.sec.gov.

We maintain a website at www.aclaristx.com. Information contained in or accessible through our website does not constitute a part of this prospectus.

INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to "incorporate by reference" information into this prospectus, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to another document filed separately with the SEC. The SEC file number for the documents incorporated by reference in this prospectus is 001-37581. The documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus contain important information that you should read about us.

The following documents are incorporated by reference into this document:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, filed with the SEC on March 23, 2016 and amended on April 25, 2016;

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on May 11, 2016 and August 11, 2016;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on March 30, 2016, May 27, 2016, June 2, 2016, June 29, 2016, August 4, 2016, September 13, 2016 and November 2, 2016, to the extent the information in such reports is filed and not furnished; and

Edgar Filing: Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc. - Form 424B5

Table of Contents

the description of our common stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A, filed with the SEC on October 2, 2015, including any amendments or reports filed for the purposes of updating this description.

We also incorporate by reference into this prospectus all documents (other than current reports furnished under Item 2.02 or Item 7.01 of Form 8-K and exhibits filed on such form that are related to such items) that are filed by us with the SEC pursuant to Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act (i) after the date of the initial filing of the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part and prior to effectiveness of the registration statement, or (ii) after the date of this prospectus but prior to the termination of the offering. These documents include periodic reports, such as Annual Reports on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K, as well as proxy statements.

We will provide to each person, including any beneficial owner, to whom a prospectus is delivered, without charge upon written or oral request, a copy of any or all of the documents that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus but not delivered with the prospectus, including exhibits that are specifically incorporated by reference into such documents. You should direct any requests for documents to Aclaris Therapeutics, Inc., Attn: Kamil Ali-Jackson, Chief Legal Officer, 101 Lindenwood Drive, Suite 400, Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355; telephone: (484) 324-7933.

Any statement contained herein or in a document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference into this document will be deemed to be modified or superseded for purposes of the document to the extent that a statement contained in this document or any other subsequently filed document that is deemed to be incorporated by reference into this document modifies or supersedes the statement.

Table of Contents

\$65,000,000

Common Stock

Prospectus Supplement

**Jefferies
Leerink Partners
Guggenheim Securities
William Blair
JMP Securities**

, 2016
