

SYNAPTIC PHARMACEUTICAL CORP  
Form SC 13G/A  
December 17, 2002

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**SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**  
Washington, DC 20549

**SCHEDULE 13G**  
**(Rule 13d-102)**

**INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN STATEMENTS FILED PURSUANT  
TO RULES 13d-1(b) (c) AND (d) AND AMENDMENTS THERETO FILED  
PURSUANT TO 13d-2(b)  
(Amendment No. 5)<sup>1</sup>**

**Synaptic Pharmaceutical Corp.**

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(Name of Issuer)

**Common Stock**

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(Title of Class of Securities)

**87156R 10 9**

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(CUSIP Number)

**December 13, 2002**

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(Date of Event Which Requires Filing of this Statement)

Check the appropriate box to designate the rule pursuant to which this Schedule is filed:

- Rule 13d-1(b)  
 Rule 13d-1(c)  
 Rule 13d-1(d)

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<sup>1</sup> The remainder of this cover page shall be filled out for a reporting person's initial filing on this form with respect to the subject class of securities, and for any subsequent amendment containing information which would alter disclosures provided in a prior cover page.

The information required on the remainder of this cover page shall not be deemed to be "filed" for the purpose of Section 18 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 or otherwise subject to the liabilities of that section of the Act but shall be subject to all other provisions of the Act (however, *see* the *Notes*).

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1 NAME OF REPORTING PERSON:

**Biotechnology Value Fund, L.P.**

I.R.S. IDENTIFICATION NOS. OF ABOVE PERSONS (ENTITIES ONLY):

2 CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX IF A MEMBER OF A GROUP\*

(a)    
 (b)

3 SEC USE ONLY

4 CITIZENSHIP OR PLACE OF ORGANIZATION

**Delaware**

|                             |          |  |
|-----------------------------|----------|--|
| NUMBER OF<br>SHARES         | <b>5</b> | SOLE VOTING POWER<br><b>0</b>              |
| BENEFICIALLY<br>OWNED<br>BY | <b>6</b> | SHARED VOTING POWER<br><b>308,149</b>      |
| EACH<br>REPORTING<br>PERSON | <b>7</b> | SOLE DISPOSITIVE POWER<br><b>0</b>         |
| WITH:                       | <b>8</b> | SHARED DISPOSITIVE POWER<br><b>308,149</b> |

9 AGGREGATE AMOUNT BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON

**308,149**

10 CHECK IF THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT IN ROW (11) EXCLUDES CERTAIN SHARES\*

11 PERCENT OF CLASS REPRESENTED BY AMOUNT IN ROW (11)

**2.8%**

12 TYPE OF REPORTING PERSON\*

PN

**\*SEE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT!**

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1 NAME OF REPORTING PERSON:  
**Biotechnology Value Fund II, L.P.**  
I.R.S. IDENTIFICATION NOS. OF ABOVE PERSONS (ENTITIES ONLY):

2 CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX IF A MEMBER OF A GROUP\* (a)    
(b)

3 SEC USE ONLY

4 CITIZENSHIP OR PLACE OF ORGANIZATION

**Delaware**

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| NUMBER OF<br>SHARES<br>BENEFICIALLY<br>OWNED<br>BY<br>EACH<br>REPORTING<br>PERSON<br>WITH: | 7 | SOLE VOTING POWER<br><b>0</b>             |
|  | 6 | SHARED VOTING POWER<br><b>64,051</b>      |
|  | 7 | SOLE DISPOSITIVE POWER<br><b>0</b>        |
|  | 8 | SHARED DISPOSITIVE POWER<br><b>64,051</b> |

9 AGGREGATE AMOUNT BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON  
**64,051**

10 CHECK IF THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT IN ROW (11) EXCLUDES CERTAIN SHARES\*

11 PERCENT OF CLASS REPRESENTED BY AMOUNT IN ROW (11)  
**.6%**

12 TYPE OF REPORTING PERSON\*  
**PN**

**\*SEE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT!**

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1 NAME OF REPORTING PERSON:  
**BVF Investments, L.L.C.**

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I.R.S. IDENTIFICATION NOS. OF ABOVE PERSONS (ENTITIES ONLY):

2 CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX IF A MEMBER OF A GROUP\* (a)  (b)

3 SEC USE ONLY

4 CITIZENSHIP OR PLACE OF ORGANIZATION

Delaware

|                       |   |                          |         |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------|
| NUMBER OF SHARES      | 5 | SOLE VOTING POWER        | 0       |
| BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY | 6 | SHARED VOTING POWER      | 106,833 |
| EACH REPORTING PERSON | 7 | SOLE DISPOSITIVE POWER   | 0       |
| WITH:                 | 8 | SHARED DISPOSITIVE POWER | 106,833 |

9 AGGREGATE AMOUNT BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON  
106,833

10 CHECK IF THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT IN ROW (11) EXCLUDES CERTAIN SHARES\* o

11 PERCENT OF CLASS REPRESENTED BY AMOUNT IN ROW (11)  
1.0%

12 TYPE OF REPORTING PERSON\*  
OO

**\*SEE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT!**

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1 NAME OF REPORTING PERSON:  
BVF Partners L.P.

I.R.S. IDENTIFICATION NOS. OF ABOVE PERSONS (ENTITIES ONLY):

2 CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX IF A MEMBER OF A GROUP\* (a)  (b)

3 SEC USE ONLY

4 CITIZENSHIP OR PLACE OF ORGANIZATION

Delaware

|   |   |                          |         |
|---|---|--------------------------|---------|
| NUMBER OF SHARES                            | 5 | SOLE VOTING POWER        | 0       |
| BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON | 6 | SHARED VOTING POWER      | 515,683 |
| WITH:                                       | 7 | SOLE DISPOSITIVE POWER   | 0       |
|   | 8 | SHARED DISPOSITIVE POWER | 515,683 |

9 AGGREGATE AMOUNT BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON

515,683

10 CHECK IF THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT IN ROW (11) EXCLUDES CERTAIN SHARES\* o

11 PERCENT OF CLASS REPRESENTED BY AMOUNT IN ROW (11)

4.7%

12 TYPE OF REPORTING PERSON\*

PN

\*SEE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT!

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1 NAME OF REPORTING PERSON:

**BVF Inc.**

S.S. OR I.R.S. IDENTIFICATION NOS. OF ABOVE PERSONS (ENTITIES ONLY):

2 CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX IF A MEMBER OF A GROUP\* (a) y

(b) o

3 SEC USE ONLY

4 CITIZENSHIP OR PLACE OF ORGANIZATION

Delaware

|   |   |                          |         |
|---|---|--------------------------|---------|
| NUMBER OF SHARES                            | 5 | SOLE VOTING POWER        | 0       |
| BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON | 6 | SHARED VOTING POWER      | 515,683 |
| WITH:                                       | 7 | SOLE DISPOSITIVE POWER   | 0       |
|   | 8 | SHARED DISPOSITIVE POWER | 515,683 |

9 AGGREGATE AMOUNT BENEFICIALLY OWNED BY EACH REPORTING PERSON  
515,683

10 CHECK IF THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT IN ROW (11) EXCLUDES CERTAIN SHARES\* 0

11 PERCENT OF CLASS REPRESENTED BY AMOUNT IN ROW (11)  
4.7%

12 TYPE OF REPORTING PERSON\*  
IA, CO

**\*SEE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT!**

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ITEM 1(a). NAME OF ISSUER:

Synaptic Pharmaceutical Corp. ("Synaptic")

ITEM 1(b). ADDRESS OF ISSUER'S PRINCIPAL EXECUTIVE OFFICES:

215 College Road  
Paramus, NJ 07652

ITEM 2(a). NAME OF PERSON FILING:

This Amendment to Schedule 13G is being filed on behalf of the following persons\*:

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- (i) Biotechnology Value Fund, L.P. ("BVF")
- (ii) Biotechnology Value Fund II, L.P. ("BVF2")
- (iii) BVF Investments, L.L.C. ("Investments")
- (iv) BVF Partners L.P. ("Partners")
- (v) BVF Inc. ("BVF Inc.")

\* Attached as Exhibit 1 is a copy of an agreement among the persons filing (as specified hereinabove) that this Amendment to Schedule 13G is being filed on behalf of each of them.

**ITEM 2(b). ADDRESS OF PRINCIPAL BUSINESS OFFICE:**

The principal business office of the persons comprising the group filing this Amendment to Schedule 13G is located at 227 West Monroe Street, Suite 4800, Chicago, Illinois, 60606.

**ITEM 2(c). CITIZENSHIP:**

|              |                                      |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| BVF:         | a Delaware limited partnership       |
| BVF2:        | a Delaware limited partnership       |
| Investments: | a Delaware limited liability company |
| Partners:    | a Delaware limited partnership       |
| BVF Inc.:    | a Delaware corporation               |

**ITEM 2(d). TITLE OF CLASS OF SECURITIES:**

Common Stock.

**ITEM 2(e). CUSIP Number:**

87156R 10 9

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**ITEM 3. IF THIS STATEMENT IS FILED PURSUANT TO RULE 13d-1(b), or 13d-2(b) or (c) CHECK WHETHER THE PERSON FILING IS: One of the following**

Not applicable as this Amendment to Schedule 13G is filed pursuant to Rule 13d-1(c).

**ITEM 4. OWNERSHIP:**

The information in items 1 and 5 through 11 on the cover pages (pp. 2 - 6) on this Amendment to Schedule 13G is hereby incorporated by reference.

**ITEM 5. OWNERSHIP OF FIVE PERCENT OR LESS OF A CLASS:**

If this statement is being filed to report the fact that as of the date hereof the reporting person has ceased to be the beneficial owner of more than five percent of the class of securities check the following. ý

**ITEM 6. OWNERSHIP OF MORE THAN FIVE PERCENT ON BEHALF OF ANOTHER PERSON:**

BVF shares voting and dispositive power over the shares of the common stock it beneficially owns with Partners. BVF2 also shares voting and dispositive power over the shares of the common stock it beneficially owns with Partners. Investments also shares voting and dispositive power over the shares of the common stock it beneficially owns with Partners. Pursuant to the operating agreement of Investments, Partners is

authorized, among other things, to invest the funds of Ziff Asset Management, L.P., the majority member of Investments, in shares of the common stock Investments beneficially owns and to vote and exercise dispositive power over those shares of common stock. Partners and BVF Inc. share voting and dispositive power over the shares of the common stock they beneficially own with, in addition to BVF, BVF2 and Investments, a managed account on whose behalf Partners, as investment manager, purchased such shares. The managed account does not own more than 5% of the common stock of Synaptic.

**ITEM 7. IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE SUBSIDIARY WHICH ACQUIRED THE SECURITY BEING REPORTED ON BY THE PARENT HOLDING COMPANY:**

Not applicable.

**ITEM 8. IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF MEMBERS OF A GROUP:**

Not applicable.

**ITEM 9. NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION OF GROUP:**

Not applicable.

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**ITEM 10. CERTIFICATION**

By signing below I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the securities referred to above were not acquired and are not held for the purpose of or with the effect of changing or influencing the control of the issuer of the securities and were not acquired and are not held in connection with or as a participant in any transaction having that purpose or effect.

After reasonable inquiry and to the best of my knowledge and belief, I certify that the information set forth in this statement is true, complete and correct.

Dated: December 17, 2002

**BIOTECHNOLOGY VALUE FUND, L.P.**

By: BVF Partners L.P., its general partner

By: BVF Inc., its general partner

By: /s/ MARK N. LAMPERT

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Mark N. Lampert  
President

**BIOTECHNOLOGY VALUE FUND II, L.P.**

By: BVF Partners L.P., its general partner

By: BVF Inc., its general partner

By: /s/ MARK N. LAMPERT

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Mark N. Lampert  
President

**BVF INVESTMENTS, L.L.C.**



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By: BVF Partners L.P., its manager

By: BVF Inc., its general partner

By: /s/ MARK N. LAMPERT

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Mark N. Lampert  
President

**BVF PARTNERS L.P.**

By: BVF Partners L.P., its general partner

By: /s/ MARK N. LAMPERT

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Mark N. Lampert  
President

**BVF INC.**

By: /s/ MARK N. LAMPERT

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Mark N. Lampert  
President

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QuickLinks

SCHEDULE 13D