

Monday, 29, September, 2008

CANCER RESEARCH UK AND ASTEX THERAPEUTICS JOIN FORCES TO DEVELOP NEW ANTI-CANCER TREATMENT

Cancer Research UK, Cancer Research Technology (CRT) – the charity’s development and commercialisation arm - and Astex Therapeutics Limited announced today that they have agreed to take into development a potential new anti-cancer treatment.

AT13148 – a protein kinase B inhibitor* - is the second drug to enter the charity’s Clinical Development Partnerships (CDP) programme. This deal follows the first CDP agreement with AstraZeneca** in May 2008.

The CDP initiative was set up in 2006 to advance promising anti-cancer agents into the clinic – offering companies with compounds an alternative model to traditional out licensing by allowing them to retain rights to the compound throughout the development process.

Under the terms of this new agreement, Cancer Research UK's specialised Drug Development Office will carry out further development work on the agent. Some of this work will be undertaken by The Institute of Cancer Research and if successful it will be taken into phase I clinical trials at the Royal Marsden Hospital.

Dr Victoria John, head of clinical partnerships at Cancer Research UK, said: “We’re very excited to be entering this deal with Astex Therapeutics. This agent has been identified as a promising development candidate, which has the potential to impact on a wide range of cancers. Entering into this partnership is an excellent example of how the charity can work with industry to help bring much needed new treatments to cancer patients.”

This work will be funded primarily by Cancer Research UK with the charity receiving a share of any revenues including a royalty on sales. The molecule was originally discovered by scientists on the PKB drug discovery programme, a collaboration between Astex Therapeutics, CRT and The Institute of Cancer Research, which ran from 2003 through to 2006.

Harren Jhoti, Astex Therapeutics’ chief executive officer said: “This agreement with Cancer Research UK builds on the previous PKB drug discovery collaboration with The Institute of Cancer Research and CRT, which began in 2003 and first identified this agent.

“Astex Therapeutics is committed to the discovery of small molecule drugs and we already have a number of our candidate agents in development with pharmaceutical companies across the world. Given the productivity of our drug discovery approach, the challenge for Astex has been to find innovative ways to continue to fund the development of all of our compounds and the CDP programme clearly addresses that constraint. Our history of working with Cancer Research

UK on AT13148 means they are uniquely placed to partner with us on the development of this potentially exciting new treatment and we await the outcome of their work with interest.”

Dr Keith Blundy, chief executive of Cancer Research Technology, said: “We’re very pleased to be entering our second CDP agreement this year and this deal presents us with an opportunity to take forward an exciting new development candidate. Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies have to prioritise which agents they take into clinical development and this agreement highlights the benefits of collaborating in research efforts to advance the development of new cancer treatments.”

-ENDS-

For media enquiries, please contact Josie Gray in the Cancer Research UK press office on 020 7061 8309 or, out of hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059.

Notes to Editors:

*Protein kinase B (also known as AKT) is responsible for the inappropriate growth and survival of tumour cells in many different cancers. Disruption of the tumour suppressor PTEN leads to activation of the PKB pathway. The development of drugs such as the small molecule inhibitor AT13148 would dampen the protein kinase B pathway and prevent tumour growth.

**AstraZeneca’s AZD0424 – a tyrosine kinase inhibitor - was the first drug to enter the Clinical Development Partnerships in May:
<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/news/archive/pressreleases/2008/may/432128>.

Further information about the programme can be found at: www.clinicalpartnerships.com