

Preclinical Development of Tumor Therapeutic Agent Starts

KIT Spinoff amcure GmbH Receives EUR 5 Million for the Development of New Tumor Therapeutic Agents and Preclinical and Clinical Studies

There is an urgent need for medical agents to treat metastatic tumors. In case of pancreatic cancer, one of the most aggressive types of cancer that is often detected late, 95% of the patients die within five years after the diagnosis. The KIT spinoff amcure develops tumor therapeutic agents that might reduce this mortality rate. For preclinical and clinical tests of the agents, amcure has now received a total of EUR 5 million from investors. This will allow for the further development of these substances in the next years.

amcure, one of the partners of which is KIT, now plans to use the funds acquired for the further development of candidate agents identified by the team of Dr. Veronique Orian-Rousseau, KIT, for the treatment of metastatic tumors. The candidate substances bind specifically to a certain so-called isoform of the surface molecule CD44 and, thus, specifically interfere with central signal paths of tumor growth, while other types of cells remain unaffected. New formation of blood vessels supplying the tumor (angiogenesis) and migration of cancer cells and their invasion into other organs (development of metastases) are inhibited. "Data from animal tests reveal that our molecules do not only stop the growth of primary tumors, but may also prevent metastasis development and cause the regression of existing metastases," says Dr. Alexandra Matzke, Chief Scientific Officer of amcure. The clinical studies that are to start in the next years will show whether these positive effects will also occur in human patients without any side effects.

The target molecule of amcure's development candidates, CD44v6, plays a significant role for many types of tumors. It was discovered in the 1990s by Professor Helmut Ponta and his team at KIT. CD44 and its isoforms are increasingly considered significant factors for the spreading and formation of metastases. Blocking the receptor CD44v6 might open up opportunities for a wide-ranging application in tumor therapy.

"If these observations will be confirmed by clinical trials with patients, amcure can lay the foundation for treating tumors much more effec-

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tively and with far fewer side effects,” emphasizes Dr. Harald Poth, Senior Investment Manager of LBBW Venture Capital.

The next development steps will be funded by a consortium headed by LBBW Venture Capital, with participations from KfW, MBG Mittelständische Beteiligungsgesellschaft Baden-Württemberg, S-Kap Beteiligungen Pforzheim, BioM AG as well as private investors. In addition, the company receives funding by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) under the special program Spinnovator managed by Ascenion GmbH. The funds are so-called series A funds provided by venture capital investors to support growth of the young KIT spinoff in the next years. Prior to and during the establishment of the company, amcure was financed by its partner KIT and the Helmholtz Association as well as from federal funds.

“The consortium around LBBW Venture consists of experienced investors having extensive networks. We are happy to have convinced them of our development approach so that now the next steps in the preclinical and clinical stages can be financed,” says Dr. Matthias Klaften, Chief Executive Officer of amcure.

More information:

http://www.innovation.kit.edu/english/shareholdings_679.php

About LBBW Venture Capital

The LBBW Venture Capital GmbH is a 100% subsidiary of the Landesbank Baden-Württemberg. Investments focus on life sciences and industrial technologies in southwest Germany. www.LBBW-venture.de

About amcure

amcure GmbH is a spinoff of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. It was established in 2012. The company develops peptide agents for the treatment of highly metastatic carcinomas. First development candidates are in the advanced preclinical development stage. In relevant proof-of-concept studies, they showed a high effectiveness for the treatment of various types of tumors, in particular pancreas cancer.

The Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation according to the legislation of the state of Baden-Württemberg. It fulfills the mission of a university and the mission of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. Research activities focus on energy, the natural and built environment as well as on society and technology and cover the whole range extending from fundamental aspects to application.

With about 9400 employees, including more than 6000 staff members in the science and education sector, and 24500 students, KIT is one of the biggest research and education institutions in Europe. Work of KIT is based on the knowledge triangle of research, teaching, and innovation.

This press release is available on the internet at www.kit.edu.