CIZZLE BIOTECH SECURES PARTNERSHIP WITH FUJIREBIO DIAGNOSTICS INCORPORATED TO DEVELOP LUNG CANCER TEST

CIZZLE Biotechnology Limited, a spin-out company from the University of York and leading clinical diagnostics company Fujirebio Diagnostics Incorporated (FDI) have today announced a co-development and licencing deal for a blood test for the detection of early stage lung cancers.

Under the licence, FDI is granted exclusive rights to patents and technology developed by Cizzle’s chief scientist Dr Dawn Coverley of the University of York’s Department of Biology. FDI and Cizzle will work together to develop a commercially valid test that can be taken forward through regulatory and clinical development worldwide.

The test arises from the research of Dr Coverley and colleagues, funded by a group of investors led by the charity Yorkshire Cancer Research, the White Rose Technology Seedcorn Fund and Finance Yorkshire, which demonstrated that an altered form of the protein known as Ciz1 is present in lung cancers and that this altered form can be detected in blood samples of patients, even when the cancer is at a very early stage. These findings, published in the US journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in October 2012(1) were protected and developed by Cizzle to the point at which an international partner could be approached.

Early detection of lung cancer has been shown to save lives, but current methods for screening at-risk people are either too costly or involve invasive procedures. For advanced lung cancer, the long-term survival rate is only about 5%. Unlike some other common cancers, survival rates have not improved significantly in more than 30 years and there is an unmet need for new clinical biomarkers in this field.

Cizzle was founded to exploit the work of Dr Coverley and colleagues with the aim of developing the commercial potential of scientific discoveries and realising their value in clinical use. Under the agreements announced today, Cizzle will work with FDI through a
Supported Research Agreement to develop the research lab test into a simplified version that can be used in clinical practice.

Commenting on the partnership with Fujirebio Dr Coverley said: “I am delighted to have the opportunity to combine the specialist knowledge of my team with the resources and expertise of Fujirebio to realise the full potential of Ciz1 in cancer diagnostics. We think this relationship is exactly what is needed to take our exciting results to the next stage and deliver a fully functioning test that will be of tangible benefit to cancer patients.”

Cizzle CEO David Browning added: “In the UK there is a funding gap that is difficult for biotech start-ups to negotiate, which means that many ventures based on innovative scientific discoveries with significant potential clinical benefit never reach the point of commercialisation. With the support of our investors, Cizzle has been able to bridge that gap and develop the technology to a point where it can be further developed for global markets”.

Morgan Williams, Head of Commercialisation at Yorkshire Cancer Research, said: “One of our aims is to help move early-stage, innovative cancer technologies towards a position where they become ready for further development by the pharmaceutical or biotechnology sectors. With our partners, this is just what we have achieved here, and we have genuine hope that the Cizzle-FDI relationship will deliver a test of real benefit to patients.”

(1) Higgins et.al. Variant Ciz1 is a circulating biomarker for early stage lung cancer. PNAS 2012 109 (45) 18263–18263;

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