

VENTUREWIRE

Friday, October 21, 2005

Avidia Partners Preclinical Cancer Program With MedImmune

Mountain View, Calif. -- Mountain View, Calif.-based biotherapeutic developer Avidia Inc. said it has entered a collaborative development agreement with MedImmune Inc. for a preclinical anti-cancer program targeting a target known as cMET.

"From a financial point of view, definitely, this has meaning for the company," Avidia Chief Executive Peter Van Vlasselaer said, although specific terms for the deal were not disclosed. As part of the deal his company receives an upfront payment and MedImmune will support the preclinical research and development efforts around the cMET program. Avidia is also eligible for milestone payments and royalties as MedImmune will be responsible for clinical development and commercialization efforts.

Van Vlasselaer also described the MedImmune deal as important in that it further validates the company's platform technology, which involves the development of Avimers - small proteins structurally unlike antibodies but with similar and perhaps improved binding and efficacy characteristics. Van Vlasselaer also touted MedImmune's protein engineering experience.

MedImmune Ventures, the company's venture arm, was a participant in Avidia's \$28.5 million Series B. Van Vlasselaer said the company had been in discussion with MedImmune regarding an R&D collaboration before the round's close in May. He added that, as part of its Series B investment, the pharmaceutical firm had "gone through a number of diligence steps as well, so they have a very in depth understanding of the capabilities of this technology."

Avidia has developed a library of potential therapeutic molecules from its Avimer platform, a technology centered on an ability to link diverse, naturally-occurring protein binding domains into these so-called Avimers. The structure is comparable to a necklace comprised of different beads on a string, with each bead representing a different domain. The result is the creation of proteins with a unique physiology, multi-functionality, and an ability to demonstrate improved affinity and specificity characteristics over existing therapeutic antibodies and proteins.

Within its internal program, Avidia's lead candidate - an interleukin-6 blocker for the treatment of autoimmune and inflammatory conditions - is still in preclinical development. "We just met with the FDA a few weeks ago and had a very good meeting with them. We understand the expectations that this new technology will have to meet to get into the clinic," Van Vlasselaer said.

Expectations for clinical entry are during the second quarter of 2006.

The company has several other early stage products. Asked if Avidia would consider other partnering opportunities, the CEO said, "I don't think we will be doing a large number of deals. We are going to be quite selective."

The Series B was intended to support the lead through Phase II proof-of-concept trials. Morganthaler Ventures led the round with participation coming from TPG Ventures, MedImmune, Amgen Ventures, Alloy Ventures, Maxygen Inc.

Prior to the latest round, Avidia raised a \$3.65 million Series A in July 2003.

<http://www.avidia.com>

<http://www.medimmune.com>