



Press Release

Start-up Trianta to Exploit the Power of T Cells for Cancer Therapy

First patient enrolled in Phase I study in AML

13 January 2014, Munich, Germany – Trianta Immunotherapies GmbH, a recently founded spin-off from the Helmholtz Zentrum München, has closed a license agreement with the Helmholtz Zentrum München and the Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine Berlin-Buch (MDC) granting Trianta worldwide, exclusive rights to IP and know-how relating to technologies for the development of personalized dendritic cell vaccines and adoptive T-cell therapies. Both platforms are based on many years' intense research and development work by Prof. Dolores Schendel and her team at the Helmholtz Zentrum München, in collaboration with Prof. Thomas Blankenstein at the MDC. Ascenion, the institutes' technology transfer partner, has been working with the teams for years, helping to secure comprehensive patent protection and finally mediating the license contract. In the context of the deal, Ascenion has acquired an equity stake in the company.

Trianta pursues different immunotherapeutic strategies to target various tumour types and stages. Each one is focused on T cells, a type of white blood cell that plays a pivotal role in immunity. "T cells are by nature the best weapons against cancer. Only they have the capacity to cure the disease," explains Dolores Schendel, CEO and CSO of Trianta. "Our understanding of immune mechanisms has increased enormously over the last decade, and now our vision of activating T cells to effectively combat cancer starts to become a clinical reality, as is demonstrated by recent breakthroughs of various teams around the globe."

Trianta's most advanced platform enables the design of personalized, third generation dendritic cell vaccines with unique capability to induce the maturation of tumour-specific T cells in a patient's body and to trigger both T cells and natural killer cells to attack cancer cells. This approach is ideally suited to the treatment of minimal residual disease. First-in-man experience from compassionate-use settings suggest that these vaccines are safe and highly effective in eliciting immune responses. An academic Phase I trial in acute myeloid leukemia (AML) is currently ongoing at the Ludwig Maximilian University Hospital, Munich, and an academic Phase II trial in prostate cancer is expected to start in 2014 at the Oslo University Hospital.

A second platform allows the development of adoptive T-cell therapies for the treatment of advanced tumour stages. Patient-derived T cells are armed *ex vivo* with new T-cell receptors that enable them to detect and kill cancer cells effectively. In this way, a large army of specific T cells is made available to patients within just 10 days, ready to combat the tumour, regardless of the generalized immune suppression caused by large tumour burdens *in vivo*. Trianta is currently establishing a comprehensive library of recombinant T-cell receptors and a GMP-compliant process for their combination with patient-derived T cells.

"We are very much impressed with the scientific excellence and the outstanding commitment of Prof. Schendel and her team," comments Dr Stefanie Possekel, Director Technology Management at Ascenion. "It is remarkable how far they have managed to advance their approach up to now by collaborating with first-tier academics and clinicians, as well as foresightedly interacting with regulatory authorities."

The team of Prof. Schendel has attracted public grants to fund early developmental work, including an m⁴ Award of the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs and a grant under the EXIST programme of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. Trianta has just initiated its first financing round and is currently evaluating different funding strategies.

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About Trianta

Trianta Immunotherapies GmbH was founded in late 2013 to exploit the therapeutic and commercial potential of innovative T cell-focused therapies developed by the team of Prof. Dolores Schendel at the Helmholtz Zentrum München, in collaboration with Prof. Thomas Blankenstein at the Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine Berlin-Buch. The company is working on three platforms for the personalized treatment of various tumour types and stages, each one focused on T cells:

- Dendritic cell vaccines, clinical stage: inducing the maturation of own, cancer-specific T cells and triggering both T cells and natural killer cells to attack the tumor; suited for the treatment of minimal residual disease
- Adoptive T cell therapy, late preclinical stage: arming patient-derived T cells ex vivo with suitable T cell receptors that enable them to detect and efficiently kill cancer cells in vivo; suited for the treatment of advanced cancer
- T cell-specific antibodies, proof-of-technology: depleting unwanted T cells based on their unique T cell receptors; intended for the treatment of T cell-mediated diseases or in preparation of transplantations

Trianta has initiated an academic Phase I trial in acute myeloid leukemia (AML) end of 2013, in collaboration with Prof. Wolfgang Hiddemann at the Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU) Hospital Munich and Dr Marion Subklewe, head of Clinical Cooperation Group 'Immunotherapy', a joint project of LMU and Helmholtz Zentrum München. In addition, Trianta expects to start an academic Phase II trial in prostate cancer in 2014, together with Prof. Gunnar Kvalheim at the Oslo University Hospital.

Teams at Ascenion and Bio^M, in particular Prof. Horst Domdey and Dr Bernhard Wimmer, have supported the research group in all aspects of IP, funding, foundation and business development.

About Ascenion

Ascenion GmbH is an IP asset management company with particular expertise in the life sciences. Ascenion advises and supports public research institutions with regard to the protection and exploitation of their intellectual property (patents, know-how, materials), and initiates and mediates license agreements between research institutions and industry. The company places particular emphasis on coaching company founders and on active equity management. Ascenion was founded in 2001 as a 100% subsidiary of the LifeScience Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Research and has since acquired 24 research institutes in the Helmholtz and Leibniz Associations, together with the Hannover Medical School and the research institute TWINCORE as exclusive partners. Ascenion currently markets around 750 technologies on behalf of these institutes, and closes an average of about 80 revenue-generating agreements between research and industry per year. The team has also coached numerous spin-offs through their foundation and early growth and Ascenion holds equity in 27 of these companies. Ascenion's headquarters are in Munich, with further offices in Berlin, Braunschweig, Hamburg, Hanover and Neuherberg.

Further information at www.ascenion.de