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EvoGenix to collaborate with US National Institutes of Health

Antibody therapeutics company EvoGenix Ltd (ASX:EGX) announced today that the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) has selected the company to collaborate in the development of antibody therapies against a new cancer target.

Dr Frank Cuttitta, senior investigator and head of the Angiogenesis Core Facility at the US National Cancer Institute (NCI) based in Bethesda, Maryland, discovered in 2004 that a small protein called PAMP was a vital factor in angiogenesis, the process of forming new blood vessels that supply nutrients and oxygen to growing tumours.

EvoGenix will work with the NIH under a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA). EvoGenix will provide tailored antibodies against PAMP and scientists at the NCI will carry out testing and initial clinical evaluation of these new anti-cancer therapeutics.

Antibodies targeting angiogenesis are of established value in cancer treatment. For example, Genentech's Avastin for the treatment of colorectal, breast and lung cancer has achieved sales of more than US\$1 billion after only two years on the market.

Dr Alfredo Martinez, one of the world's experts on PAMP, now located at the Cajal Institute in Madrid, Spain, commented: "I believe that PAMP has excellent potential as a new target for the treatment of solid tumours. It appears that PAMP-related proteins act earlier in blood vessel formation than the target for Avastin, VEGF, so that inhibitory antibodies provided by EvoGenix may provide broader suppression than Avastin of new blood vessel growth."

EvoGenix was selected as the partner for the NCI team due to its ability to produce highly potent humanised antibodies suitable for therapeutic testing.

"Imminent testing of our antibodies by the NCI team will confirm the value of this new approach to cancer therapy" said Steffen Nock, President of the EvoGenix US operations.

The announcement of the agreement with NIH will be discussed by EvoGenix chairman Chris Harris at the company's Annual General Meeting held today in Melbourne.

(Information and an audio version of the company's AGM presentation will be available after the meeting at: www.evogenix.com)

About EvoGenix

EvoGenix Limited (ASX:EGX) has established leading technology capabilities for creating high value antibody and protein-based therapeutics. The company exploits its capabilities through technology collaborations with partner companies, and by development in-house of a succession of wholly-owned antibody and protein products.

Antibodies are natural proteins designed to attack, block and remove unwanted materials from the body. Antibodies are usually first made in animals such as mice or rats, and in their initial state are unsuitable for use in patients, because the foreign protein is rapidly rejected by the human immune system.

The EvoGenix technology can convert a research-stage antibody into a high potency therapeutic suitable for long term administration to patients. This is a key value-creating step in antibody development.

The technology operates in two stages

- Superhumanisation™, a superior approach for modifying antibodies generated in animals so that they retain their essential therapeutic properties but appear “human-like” and will not be rejected by the immune system of patients receiving them.
- EvoGene™ Optimisation, a highly efficient, novel process for fine-tuning antibodies and other proteins to increase their activity. The process involves making billions of copies of the antibody, each with one or two small changes compared with the original. The copies are then tested to find those with improved properties, for example more powerful attachment to a target to improve potency, or more effective cancer cell killing.

EvoGene™ technology can also be used to optimise other types of protein pharmaceuticals in addition to antibodies.

EvoGenix is progressively building company value by assembling a portfolio of revenues from technology collaborations using its unique technology capabilities. Multi project collaborations with GlaxoSmithKline and Australia’s CSL Limited have been announced in the past 12 months.

At the same time EvoGenix is advancing its internal product pipeline, with current products aimed at the treatment of osteoporosis, lung cancer, melanoma and respiratory infections. Generally, these will be out-licensed prior to the clinical stage to meet the existing high demand for new biotherapeutic products in the pharmaceutical industry.

For further information:

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