



SAVIRA PHARMACEUTICALS – Defeating Influenza

onepharm and EMBL establish new company with the help of AWS. Focus on development of novel anti-influenza drugs

Vienna, 23.9.2009 – Savira, an Austrian pharmaceutical company focusing on the development of novel anti-influenza drugs was recently established in Vienna and supported with seed financing of 1 Mio Euro by the AWS (Austria Wirtschaftsservice). Based on intellectual property from the co-founders, the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) from Heidelberg, Germany and the biotech company onepharm from Vienna, Austria, Savira will manage a medicinal chemistry program aiming at the identification of lead candidates and the development of anti-influenza drugs.

“EMBL is pleased to be co-founder of Savira” says Martin Raditsch, Deputy Managing Director from EMBLEM, the commercial subsidiary of EMBL. “We were impressed, how fast this company has been established by the operational team in Vienna and how professionally Savira has been supported and funded by the AWS.” EMBL supports the founding process of spin-out companies in its member states to exploit the outcome of its research efforts for all stakeholders. EMBLEM has licensed the intellectual property on groundbreaking results of the structural identification of two influenza polymerase targets to Savira.

onepharm, a Viennese Biotech company with a focus on development of drugs for the treatment of periodontitis and other chronic inflammatory diseases assigns its anti-influenza research team and related know-how to Savira. “We are pleased that our substantial expertise in influenza research will now benefit the development of Savira”, says Bernhard Küenburg, CEO of onepharm. “Over the past 3 years, we have put significant resources into influenza research and development activities; however, as a start up company we are too small to support both, anti-inflammatory and antiviral drug development. The foundation of Savira is the basis for the successful continuation of both activities.”

Novel therapeutics based on the inhibition of the influenza polymerase

The PB2 cap-binding and PA endonuclease active sites, two crucial domains in the trimeric viral RNA-dependent polymerase, are among the most promising targets for novel anti-influenza drugs. “Due to the conserved nature of these domains, it can be expected that new inhibitors will be less prone to the evolution of resistant virus strains”, explains Oliver Szolar, CEO/CSO of Savira. “Detailed knowledge of the target structures recently identified by Stephen Cusack and co-workers at EMBL, Grenoble, will allow us to rationally design selective inhibitors of the influenza virus polymerase. Through a series of screens, we already successfully extracted first hits that have proven to be active in cellular antiviral assays.”

New drugs based on the inhibition of viral endocytosis

onepharm recently discovered that Glycyrrhizin, a glycosylated triterpene and major constituent of liquorice, exerts its anti-influenza activity by inhibition of viral endocytosis. Over the last years, a variety of novel substituted triterpenes were generated in the course of a comprehensive medicinal chemistry program revealing compounds with significantly increased anti-influenza activity. “We will exploit the anti-influenza potential of these new compounds and identify lead candidates for further development”, says Oliver Szolar. Thus, Savira’s sound development pipeline will be fuelled from three different medicinal chemistry programs.



About onepharm

onepharm, a Vienna-based Biotech company, was founded jointly by the management and Avir Green Hills Biotechnology in 2005. The company focuses on the development of its lead candidate OPM-3023 in chronic inflammatory indications such as periodontitis, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease. In addition, new derivatives of OPM-3023 are synthesized and screened for their anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties. To this date, onepharm has been able to attract funds exceeding EUR 9 million, including equity capital, subsidized loans and research grants.

About EMBL

The European Molecular Biology Laboratory is a basic research institute funded by public research monies from 20 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and associate member state Australia. Research at EMBL is conducted by approximately 80 independent groups covering the spectrum of molecular biology. The Laboratory has five units: the main Laboratory in Heidelberg, and Outstations in Hinxton (the European Bioinformatics Institute), Grenoble, Hamburg, and Monterotondo near Rome. The cornerstones of EMBL's mission are: to perform basic research in molecular biology; to train scientists, students, and visitors at all levels; to offer vital services to scientists in the member states; to develop new instruments and methods in the life sciences and to actively engage in technology transfer activities. EMBL's International PhD Programme has a student body of about 170. The Laboratory also sponsors an active Science and Society programme. Visitors from the press and public are welcome.

About EMBLEM Technology Transfer GmbH

EMBL Enterprise Management Technology Transfer GmbH (EMBLEM) is an affiliate and the commercial arm of the EMBL. EMBLEM identifies, protects and commercialises the intellectual property developed in the EMBL-world, from EMBL-alumni and from non-EMBL third parties. EMBLEM facilitates and accelerates the transfer of innovative technology from basic research to industry by working closely with industrial partners spanning the biotech, pharmaceutical, IT and mechanical/electrical engineering markets.

Contact

onepharm Research & Development GmbH

Dr. Bernhard Kuenburg, CEO
bernhard.kuenburg@onepharm.com
www.onepharm.com

Veterinärplatz 1A, Object IA, 2nd floor
A-1210 Vienna
Phone: +43 1 25077 5900
Fax: +43 1 25077 5999

EMBLEM Technology Transfer GmbH

Dr. Martin Raditsch
Deputy Managing Director
Raditsch@embl-em.de
www.embl-em.de

Boxbergring 107
D-69126 Heidelberg
Phone: +49 6221 363 22 22
Fax: +49 6221 363 22 29

Savira Pharmaceuticals

Dr. Oliver Szolar, CEO/CSO
oliver.szolar@savira.at
www.savira.at

Veterinärplatz 1A, Object IA, 2nd floor
A-1210 Vienna
Phone: +43 1 25077 5904
Fax: +43 1 25077 5999