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AUM Biosciences acquires anti-cancer drug from A*STAR

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AUM Biosciences (AUM), a Singapore headquartered oncology-focused biotechnology company, has licensed its first novel, highly selective anti-cancer drug, ETC-206, from A*STAR's Experimental Therapeutics Centre (ETC). The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) is Singapore's lead public sector agency that spearheads economic oriented research to advance scientific discovery and develop innovative technology.

AUM has licensed the global rights to develop, commercialise and manufacture ETC-206 in all indications. ETC-206 was discovered and developed through a collaboration between A*STAR's Experimental Therapeutics Centre (ETC) and Duke-NUS Medical School (a partnership between Duke University School of Medicine and the National University of Singapore). It advanced into first-in-man trials in December 2016. Initial clinical studies suggest that ETC-206 is very well tolerated and could be used as a therapy across a range of liquid and solid tumour types.

The drug promises a more targeted approach by inhibiting the Mnk enzyme in cancer cells, which is a key player in promoting cancer growth when activated. This could lower mortality rates for cancer and improve quality of life for cancer patients compared to traditional chemotherapy, which kills cells in a less specific fashion and affects more than just the cancer cells.

"Due to low efficacy and steep costs associated with many cancer treatments, the demand for more precise anti-cancer treatments has become imperative. AUM's small molecule and biomarker driven approach allows us to implement innovative trial designs enabling "multiple shots on goal", in cancer treatment," AUM's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Vishal Doshi said.

ETC-206 is the first in AUM's pipeline of novel targeted therapies with the potential to be developed both independently and in combination with other therapies. The drug's ability to isolate and target only cancerous cells promises a breakthrough opportunity globally.

"ETC-206 is a prime example of how A*STAR has been able to translate R&D into positive outcomes to create economic growth and enhance lives for Singaporeans. We look forward to working closely with more Singapore based enterprises such as AUM Biosciences as we continue to leverage our drug discovery and development capabilities to support the growth of the local biotech ecosystem in Singapore." Said Dr Damian O'Connell, Chief Executive Officer of A*STAR's Experimental

Therapeutics Centre.

As a future roadmap, AUM has a strategic focus of acquiring and developing promising small molecules targeted oncology assets to unlock their potential, including those that are de-prioritised or not progressed by their originators due to strategic and financial limitations in the healthcare industry. Its mandate of “No biomarker, No drug” serves to increase the probability of success.

Cancer prevalence in Asia is estimated at 17.4 million in 2018, with about 8.8 million new cases every year, accounting for about half of the new global cancer cases. The number of new cases in Asia is expected to increase from 8.8 million in 2018 to 11.8 million by 2030 creating a huge unmet medical need in Asia.