

Singapore-based startup Hummingbird Bioscience inks oncology deal with Merck

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To evaluate HMBD-001, a potentially best-in-class anti-HER3 mAb, in combination with cetuximab, an anti-EGFR mAb, in sqNSCLC



Singapore-based startup Hummingbird Bioscience has entered into a clinical trial collaboration and supply agreement with Merck to evaluate HMBD-001 in combination with cetuximab in squamous non-small cell lung carcinoma (sqNSCLC).

The *HER3* protein, that belongs to the ErbB/HER receptor tyrosine kinase (RTK) family, is expressed in several types of tumours.

Under this collaboration, Hummingbird Bioscience will evaluate the safety, tolerability, and anti-tumour activity of its potentially best-in-class HER3-targeting antibody, HMBD-001, in combination with standard of care chemotherapy with or without Merck's cetuximab, anti-EGFR mAb, in patients with sqNSCLC in a Phase 1b clinical trial, to be initiated in the second half of 2023.

Merck will supply cetuximab for the Hummingbird Bioscience-sponsored study and both parties will retain all commercial rights to their respective compounds.

"This is the first squamous disease setting of several for which HER3 plays a critical role in etiology and where HER targeted therapies could potentially deliver clinical benefit," said Jerome Boyd-Kirkup, Ph.D., Chief Scientific Officer, Hummingbird Bioscience. "In addition to standard of care chemotherapy, the inhibition of HER3 or the concurrent inhibition of HER3 and EGFR has significant potential to improve outcomes in sqNSCLC patients refractory to front-line immunotherapies."

HMBD-001 is a clinical-stage IgG1 antibody designed to target HER3. Discovered using Hummingbird Bioscience's proprietary Rational Antibody Discovery (RAD) platform, HMBD-001 is now in development for the treatment of multiple solid tumours.