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Australia's Immutep signs license agreement with UK-based Cardiff University for next gen cancer drug

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Immutep's programme aims to develop an orally-available small molecule anti-LAG-3 treatment for cancer patients at a lower cost



Australia headquartered biotech company Immutep has announced a license agreement with UK-based Cardiff University granting the company exclusive rights to develop and commercialise anti-LAG-3 small molecules.

A number of promising compounds that block LAG-3, an immune checkpoint known to reduce the immune system's response to fight cancer, have been identified under Immutep's collaboration with the world-leading scientists at Cardiff University.

Led by Professor Andrew Godkin of Cardiff University, Professor Andrea Brancale (now of the University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague), and Dr Frédéric Triebel, Immutep CSO, the compounds were identified by chemical library screening, molecular modelling (virtual screening) and synthetic chemistry.

To date, over a dozen companies have initiated clinical trials investigating antagonist or blocking LAG-3 antibodies including Bristol Myers Squibb's relatlimab, which was approved by the US FDA in 2022 as part of a fixed dose combination with nivolumab for the treatment of metastatic melanoma. This new combination, known as Opdualag, achieved commercial sales of $252 million and $627 million in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Immutep's programme aims to develop an orally-available small molecule anti-LAG-3 treatment for cancer patients at a lower cost compared with the anti-LAG-3 monoclonal and bi-specific antibodies that are commercially available or under clinical development today.

A joint patent application has been filed by Immutep S.A.S. and University College Cardiff Consultants Limited (a Cardiff University affiliate) to protect the new intellectual property. The License Agreement builds on Immutep's collaboration with Cardiff University which commenced in 2019. University College Cardiff Consultants will receive an upfront payment of £25,000 and a milestone payment upon first commercial sale of a licensed product, and is eligible to receive low single-digit sales based royalties.