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German, Korean firm join hands to discover cancer drugs

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Singapore: Germany's translational drug discovery organization, Lead Discovery Center (LDC), has entered into a licence deal with Korea's Qurient for exclusive worldwide rights to a series of highly-selective CDK7 inhibitors discovered at the LDC for the treatment of cancer, inflammation and viral infections.

Qurient, started in 2009 as a venture capital funded spin-off biotechnology company of the Institut Pasteur Korea (IPK), is engaged in innovative sciences and clinical development.

The partners will closely collaborate to advance the approach from the validated lead stage into clinical development. Upon successful proof-of-concept in humans they will jointly identify a suitable partner for follow-on licensing.

Under the terms of the agreement LDC will receive an upfront payment and milestone payments upon the achievement of specific development events. In addition, Qurient will fund the future development activities of the collaborative program.

The agreement on CDK7 is the second licensing deal between LDC, Max Planck Innovation and Qurient and the starting point of a broader alliance between the partners.

Expanding on the success of their ongoing collaboration on Axl kinase inhibitors initiated in 2013, both sides have agreed to join forces for the development of selected further projects from the LDC's portfolio in the fields of oncology and inflammation. The partners will closely work together, from project identification through to clinical proof-of-concept and subsequent sublicensing, with the LDC leading drug discovery and optimization and Qurient guiding preclinical and clinical development, typically until completion of Phase II.

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"It is an exciting moment for Qurient to have LDC as an upstream partner, providing innovative drug discovery programs to our 'lead-to-clinical POC' pipelines," said Dr Kiyean Nam, CEO, Qurient. "As being shown in the Axl inhibitor program, we will

join forces to achieve exceptional science and operational excellence until the program reaches mutually beneficial end point."

"The partnership with Qurient is an essential part of our strategy to create versatile opportunities for accelerating the transfer of our leads into biopharmaceutical development," says Dr Bert Klebl, CEO, LDC. "Qurient combines first-class development expertise with an exceptional commitment to moving innovative projects forward. Together, we can advance our projects swiftly into the clinic and benefit from the dynamic financial environment for biotech companies in South Korea."