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Singapore: Australia-based Bionomics has initiated a Phase 1b clinical trial in healthy volunteers of BNC210, the drug candidate in development for the treatment of anxiety and depression.

The trial will be conducted by Biotrial International at its facility in France and will investigate the safety, tolerability, pharmacokinetics, and pharmacodynamics of BNC210.

Target engagement by BNC210 will be investigated through the use of a nicotine challenge where the subjects response to nicotine will be monitored by a brain EEG. All subjects on the study will undergo a standard battery of pharmacodynamic assessments.

"We're eager to get back to the clinic with BNC210 and unlock the potential of this compound," said Dr Deborah Rathjen, CEO and managing director, Bionomics. We expect this to be a pivotal year in its development and given the data thus far are confident it will be another Bionomics drug candidate that will attract the interest of big pharma companies."

Data from this trial is anticipated in Q3, 2015.

BNC210 is a first-in-class compound for the treatment of anxiety that appears to be devoid of the considerable side effect problems of current therapies. Its mechanism of action is by negative allosteric modulation of the alpha 7 nicotinic acetylcholine receptor, a novel target for anxiety. It has been evaluated at single doses in five clinical trials and 148 subjects to date.