

Cellworks, AstraZeneca join hands for TB research

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Bangalore: AstraZeneca and Cellworks have announced a collaboration, to speed the design of novel combination therapies for the treatment of drug-sensitive and resistant tuberculosis. This collaboration, supported by the Wellcome Trust, will also pave the way for the creation of platforms and approaches to handle Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB).

Bangalore-based Cellworks is a private, venture-backed biopharmaceutical therapeutic design and development company. Under this collaboration, Cellworks and AstraZeneca will pull from a pool of existing anti-infective drugs and attempt to find an effective combination with better efficacy and lower toxicity than the treatment regimens provided today. Bangalore based Cellworks will use its proprietary predictive platform, which it pioneered in oncology and autoimmune disorders, to model drug MDR-TB and rationally identify 'synergistic combinations' that might have the highest efficacy and lowest possible toxic burden compared to all currently available combinations. AstraZeneca will then validate the top ten most effective combinations identified by Cellworks in-vitro in its laboratories, followed by validation using in-vivo model.

Speaking about this partnership, Dr Anand Anandkumar, managing director, Cellworks Group India, said: "Cellworks is honoured to take the lead on this unique drug development project which has the potential to save thousands of lives globally. Its results may also have positive implications in other infectious disease areas where drug resistance is prevalent. We are proud to be working with scientists from AstraZeneca on such a socially valuable project, funded by one of the world's leading science foundations."

Similarly, Dr Manos Perros, head of the AstraZeneca Infection Innovative Medicines Unit, also expressed his confidence about the collaboration when he said, "AstraZeneca is pleased to join this effort to speed the delivery of improved treatment combinations for TB patients worldwide. Our continued investment in infectious disease research has positioned us to

collaborate with organisations like Cellworks who share our passion for medical innovation. AstraZeneca would like to acknowledge and thank the Wellcome Trust for funding this important work. We believe that new medicines and new combination therapies to treat TB will be delivered through a concerted effort from multiple partners rather than one company's lab."