Launch of IMIDIA

An Innovative Medicines Initiative Project for Diabetes

Academia, biotech and the pharmaceutical industry have joined forces to fight diabetes.

Frankfurt, Germany / Lausanne, Switzerland / Paris, France - June 14, 2010. IMIDIA ("Innovative Medicines Initiative for Diabetes"), a public private consortium funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), announced today the launch of a project focusing on pancreatic islet cell function and survival. Academia, biotech and pharma industry have joined forces to develop biomarkers and tools to pave the way for improved disease management and ultimately provide a cure for diabetes.

Leading European experts from 14 academic institutions, 8 pharmaceutical research organizations and 1 biotech company in the area of pancreatic ß-cells (= the body's own insulin producing cells) officially launched the IMIDIA project. The project is supported by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI). IMI a unique Public Private Partnership between the pharmaceutical industry (represented by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations / EFPIA) and the European Union. The EU contributes a total of EUR 1 billion over ten years, which is matched in-kind by the EFPIA member companies.

IMIDIA is an important stepping stone in the development of better tools, biomarkers and understanding to enable the development of ß-cell medicines – a key to an ultimate long-term vision: the cure for diabetes. This pandemic disease of the 21st century currently affects 285 million people worldwide. It is anticipated that this number will rise sharply to affect 439 million people worldwide by 2030 in particular spreading to the younger population.

IMIDIA is a unique collaboration of leading research groups in Europe focusing on the necessary innovation tightly coupled with the applications and evaluation of these results to develop new diagnostics, prognostics and therapeutics. Around 100 researchers operating in 6 different scientific work packages will focus on novel approaches e.g. imaging biomarkers, systems biology and pathway analysis with the goal of developing patient relevant disease models in vitro and in vivo as well as biomarkers to monitor disease progression and treatment.

"It has been fascinating to see how a powerful consortium has been formed starting from the different worlds of academic research and the pharmaceutical industry research organizations," Werner Kramer from sanofi-aventis, Bernard Thorens from University of Lausanne and Alain Ktorza from Servier, the "Triumvirate" coordinating IMIDIA, agree. *"Guided by a sustainable win-win situation for all participants, the collaborative spirit coupled with the free flow of information and data within the IMIDIA project teams will support us - the IMIDIA team – in our endeavour to reach these ambitious goals."*

About IMIDIA:

The IMIDIA team, led by sanofi-aventis, Servier and the University of Lausanne is working on the generation of novel, patient centric tools, biomarkers, and fundamental knowledge on ß-cell organization to accelerate the path to improved diabetes management.

The scientific program aims at delivering:

Novel tools for the study of human ß-cell development, function and survival; their modulation by potential therapeutic compounds; and for in vivo ß-cell imaging.

Biomarkers for the diagnosis and prognosis of ß-cell failure and for monitoring diabetes progression and treatment.

Knowledge on novel pathways and sites that control ß-cell proliferation, differentiation and apoptosis, and on the role of known nutrient regulated pathways and sites in controlling ß-cell mass and function.

IMIDIA participants are *AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), Hannover Medical School (MHH), Imperial College London, Lilly, the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), the National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM), Novartis, Novo Nordisk, Roche, sanofi-aventis, Sarl Endocells, Servier, SIB Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, Vrije University of Brussels, Dresden University of Technology, University of Geneva, University of Lausanne, University Paris Diderot, University of Pisa.*

The close collaboration of academic teams, pharmaceutical companies and biotechs is providing unique levels of expertise and is forming a strong basis to reach the IMIDIA project goals.

For further details – please visit: http://www.imidia.org

About IMI:

The Innovative Medicines Initiative is a unique Public Private Partnership (PPP) between the pharmaceutical industry represented by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) and the European Union represented by the European Commission.

IMI's overall goal is to make Europe again the world leader in pharmaceutical research for the benefit of the economy and society, by removing research bottlenecks in the current drug development process.

For further details – please visit: http://imi.europa.eu/

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