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Singapore: Australian infectious disease therapy and vaccine development company BioDiem has signed an agreement with The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) for a research program that will investigate the use of BioDiem's live attenuated influenza virus (LAIV) to create new non-influenza vaccines.

Developing the potential of the LAIV technology for new indications is an important part of BioDiem's strategy, and this research is part of the work towards that goal.

The capacity to accept foreign genetic material and then use it to produce specific proteins that induce vaccination is well understood in many viruses. BioDiem's LAIV has a long history of safe use and provides a good basis for the development of a platform technology for manufacturing new therapeutic and preventative vaccines. This includes vaccines against a number of specific cancers caused by prior infections such as nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC), a disease of the upper airways which is of particular concern in Asia. NPC incidence is strongly correlated with infection with the Epstein-Barr virus, which represents a target for vaccination and thus NPC prevention.

The research at RMIT is expected to lead to the demonstration that re-engineered versions of BioDiem's flu virus can be produced for different disease targets. Dr Hao Van has commenced this work at the RMIT Biotechnology Laboratory in the Biosciences group led by Professor Peter Smooker who has significant experience in exploring novel approaches to vaccine creation, including with a commercially available veterinary vaccine, and in the delivery of viral antigens including HIV.

BioDiem will provide seed funding for the research and will retain full intellectual property rights relating to any new technologies produced. RMIT and BioDiem will be seeking further joint grant funding for the project. Royalties on commercial outcomes will be negotiated.

"We're pleased to enter this agreement with RMIT to explore the important area of LAIV customisation. The success of our existing vaccine licensing business is based on the ability of the LAIV to safely and effectively deliver a strong immune response, qualities we intend to expand into new indications. This partnership represents another strand in the parallel development of our portfolio of therapies and vaccines for infectious diseases and related cancers" said Julie Phillips, BioDiem CEO.