BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

Holistic drug development strategy improves probability of success in oncology therapeutics

November 22, 2021 | News | By Hithaishi C Bhaksar

In Conversation with Vishal Doshi, CEO, and Co-Founder, AUM Biosciences



AUM Biosciences is a global clinical-stage biotech company, focused on discovering and developing novel targeted oncology therapies, particularly for cancers with a clear genetic marker. AUM has an extensive track record of selecting distinctive early-stage assets, successfully exiting virtual biotech models, and has contributed significantly to the development of several currently marketed oncology treatments with annual peak sales up to $3B. AUM was founded to enable a holistic strategy for drug development and improve the probability of success with a focus on synergism, sustainability, and scalability.

In Oct 2021, AUM Biosciences (AUM) announced the successful completion of a $27 million series A funding round. The funding fueled AUM's vision of developing a world-class biotech pipeline focused on drugging what many consider as the undruggable targets, as well as addressing the need to delay and overcome resistance to targeted drugs in oncology. ***Vishal Doshi, CEO, and Co-Founder, AUM Biosciences*** further elaborates on the accelerated pipeline expansion and business growth in the APAC region.

- **How do you describe AUM Biosciences' mission towards undruggable targets and efforts in overcoming the resistance to targeted drugs in oncology?**

Cancer is one of the world's largest health problems with almost 10 million people globally dying from the illness every year. And ironically, cancer drug development can take an average of 10 to 12 years to complete while being extremely expensive for the patients to afford.

Against this backdrop, AUM Biosciences' (AUM) approach to cancer therapy is aiming to disrupt Asia's drug development by adopting a holistic strategy. AUM focuses on identifying and developing "niche busters" targeting highly selective oncology therapeutics. To achieve this, validation of a drug molecules' efficacy, as shown by early scientific read-out of the biomarker

impact, is essential. Hence, AUM has a mandate of “No biomarker, No drug”. Such an approach will improve the probability of future success and increase the overall portfolio value for AUM.

AUM’s small molecule oncology therapy may also reduce the “collateral” damage posed by traditional cancer treatment such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Using small molecule inhibitors targeting critical genomic drivers of cancer, the inhibitors are selected to focus on “chokepoints” in cell signalling and survival pathways.

- **How essential is this funding to accelerate pipeline expansion and business growth?**

This is a very exciting time for AUM Biosciences as we now have the support and partnership of our investors Everlife and SPRIM Global Investments, towards this common goal of bringing affordable and innovative drugs for the cancer patients, globally.

The successful completion of the US$27 million series A funding round will fuel AUM’s vision of developing a world class biotech pipeline focused on drugging what many consider as the undruggable targets. AUM plans to use the proceeds to advance the clinical development of its portfolio with immediate initiation of two Phase II programs for MNK and TRK inhibitors - AUM001 which is the selective, potent, safe and synergistic MNK inhibitor and AUM601, a highly selective “pan-TRK” Inhibitor with a potential for orphan drug designation.

We will be working towards identifying new business opportunities for further expansion of our oncology drug portfolio and will also look forward to partner with new financial and commercial partners in the region to fulfil our vision.

- **What are the beneficiary drugs pipelines under this funding? Will AUM's next-generation cancer therapeutics discovery will receive a boost from this funding?**

The company has been leading an innovation pipeline with a portfolio of various drugs including AUM001, AUM601, AUM302 and AUM003.

AUM001 is an MNK inhibitor which was licensed with A-Star and that was the only 2nd small molecule oncology drug that was available in Singapore. AUM001 is being developed in combination cancer therapies to minimize resistance risk, overcome resistance and improve responses in cancer patients.

AUM601 is a highly selective and effective TRK inhibitor. It has shown promising data to justify advancement to a tumor agnostic registrational program. AUM601 has shown superior in-vivo anti-tumor activity compared to available treatment options. It has shown strong efficacy on solvent front and gatekeeper mutations addressing a unique solution to the current challenges in the TRK Inhibitor market.

AUM302 is a first-in-class small molecule triple kinase inhibitor for oncological indications with a very strong potential for multiple solid tumors including an orphan drug indication. Meanwhile, AUM003 is from the MNK class of compounds as well which has shown really exciting data in brain related cancers in pre-clinical studies.

This round of funding will significantly help us advance trials for AUM001 and AUM601, we certainly wish to leverage this partnership to boost the overall sentiment around drug discovery in Asia and derive more impetus through strategic partnerships and funding to take our innovation pipeline to the next level.

- **How do you foresee APAC oncology market?**

The global oncology drugs market is expected to grow from US$80.92 billion in 2020 to US$84.38 billion in 2021 at an annual growth rate of 4.3 per cent, and the oncology market in Asia Pacific (APAC) will parallel this growth trend.

The region offers highly attractive market entry prospects with healthcare expenditure projected to grow by 7 per cent annually to US$2.4 trillion by 2022. It also accounts for roughly 50 per cent of global new cancer cases. The unmet needs of a rising number of patients with non-communicable diseases – such as cancer and diabetes – poses need as well as immense scope for life sciences companies looking to enter the APAC market. Notably, the international bio pharma companies are expanding into China, Japan and the rest of the region due to its growth potential and rising healthcare spending.

However, for successful entry into the APAC oncology market, companies will need strong, cost-efficient promotion models best suited for a selected APAC country, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Hithaishi C Bhaskar