

A*Star, Debiopharm to develop epigenetic targets

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Singapore: Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)'s Experimental Therapeutics Center (ETC) and Switzerland-based Debiopharm signed an exclusive research collaboration to develop oral small molecules targeting new class of epigenetic modulators.

Under the terms of the agreement, Debiopharm and ETC will co-finance the discovery phase of the project, whilst Debiopharm will be in charge of development.

"This partnership aims to target tumors with genetic lesions. The use of epigenetic targets is emerging as an effective and valuable approach for personalized medicine strategies for cancer treatment," said Mr Andres McAllister, chief scientific officer, research and evaluation, Debiopharm International. He also added, "ETC represents the perfect partner to develop this project as they are experts in the field of oncology and possess the full range of drug discovery capabilities. Their situation within the Biopolis campus is a major asset for the development of new products."

ETC is directed by Professor Alex Matter, CEO, ETC, who has a highly successful track record within the pharmaceutical industry. He was the global head of oncology research for Novartis Pharmaceuticals and played an important role in the success of several anticancer drugs, including Gleevec/Glivec and more recently, Tasigna.

Prof Matter was joined at ETC by a panel of seasoned industry colleagues and has put together a team of experts dedicated to the discovery and development of new medicines. Prof Matter said that, "This joint research collaboration will give both partners the opportunity to leverage on each other's strengths, with the objective of creating new and more effective treatments against cancer."

Mr Rolland-Yves Mauvernay, president and founder, Debiopharm, added that, "We are very excited to be collaborating with ETC, top oncology and drug discovery experts. This partnership strengthens our presence in Asia in a highly dynamic area for innovation when it comes to the development of new drugs. Furthermore, this collaboration is in line with our strategy focusing on patients outcomes by offering more targeted oncology therapies."

ETPL, the technology transfer arm of A*STAR, fosters strategic collaborations and deals between academia and industry. ETPL bridged the interests of ETC and Debiopharm, and accelerated the research agreement and licensing deal between both parties in an effort to encourage more of such public-private partnerships.