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ASIA EDITION

Merck, China firm to co-develop DNA repair drug

14 November 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

â€ŽSingapore: Merck Serono, the biopharmaceutical division of Merck, has signed a global licensing, co-development, and commercialization agreement with BeiGene, a biotech R&D company in China, for its BeiGene-290.

The compound, which is a potent poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase (PARP) inhibitor for the treatment of cancer, is currently in preclinical development and is expected to enter clinical development in the next year. This is the second collaboration agreement between the two companies this year.

PARP inhibitors are thought to target an enzyme family, poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase, which is involved in a number of cellular processes, including DNA repair and programmed cell death.

Under the terms of the collaboration, BeiGene will be responsible for the development and commercialization of BeiGene-290 in China, and Merck will be responsible for the development and commercialization of BeiGene-290 for the rest of the world. BeiGene will receive an undisclosed upfront payment and is eligible to receive further payments of up to $232 million for the achievement of clinical development and potential commercial milestones in China and rest of the world, and also receive royalties on net sales.

"We are delighted to announce an expansion of our strategic partnership with BeiGene. Today's announcement highlights our commitment both to establishing strong R&D partnerships in China but also to our partner BeiGene, a preeminent Chinese life sciences company focused on discovering and developing innovative oncology drugs," said Dr Susan Jane Herbert, head of Global Business Development and Strategy for Merck Serono, the biopharmaceutical division of Merck.

Mr John Oyler, CEO, BeiGene, said that, "We are very much looking forward to expanding further our collaboration with Merck to include BeiGene-290. This collaboration helps to accelerate the global development and commercialization of this China-discovered oncology innovation, something BeiGene could not have achieved alone. Furthermore this deal and Merck's previous deal with BeiGene to develop the second generation, China-discovered BRAF inhibitor, BGB-283, demonstrate Merck's deep commitment to China and external innovation."