

AstraZeneca invests in antisense therapies

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Singapore: Isis Pharmaceuticals and AstraZeneca have made a strategic collaboration to discover and develop antisense therapies for cardiovascular, metabolic and renal diseases based on novel RNA-targeted treatments.

Antisense drugs are short, chemically modified, single-stranded nucleic acids (antisense oligonucleotides) that have the ability to target any gene product of interest. They offer new opportunities for therapeutic intervention because they act inside the cell to influence protein production by targeting RNA to either prevent the production of disease-causing proteins, increase the production of proteins deficient in disease, or target toxic RNAs that are unable to generate proteins.

AstraZeneca will pay an upfront fee of \$65 million to Isis Pharmaceuticals plus development and regulatory milestones for each program that AstraZeneca advances to clinical development. Isis Pharmaceuticals is also eligible to earn tiered double-digit royalties on annual net sales for each program.

Mr Mene Pangalos, executive vice president, Innovative Medicines & Early Development at AstraZeneca, said, "Antisense-based therapies are rapidly gaining momentum in the clinic and becoming an important component of our early stage pipeline. This collaboration combines the world-class antisense drug research capabilities of Isis with our expertise in cardiovascular, metabolic and renal disease drug discovery and development. By working together, we aim to uncover targets and pathways that can be manipulated using antisense drug therapy."

Mr B Lynne Parshall, chief operating officer, Isis Pharmaceuticals, said, "This expansion of our collaboration with

AstraZeneca establishes our second strategic relationship. This new collaboration will help broaden the application of our antisense technology to targets in the kidney. AstraZeneca is committed to finding novel best-in-class therapies for some of the largest, most complex and fastest growing disease segments in the developed world. Combining our antisense technology with AstraZeneca's strong knowledge, leadership and commitment in these areas should be very valuable in fully exploiting these opportunities and moving new therapies effectively and efficiently toward the market."