



Biotech Daily

Monday April 16, 2012

Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

- * **ASX, BIOTECH DOWN: NEUREN UP 13%, CELLMID DOWN 7%**
- * **ANTISENSE'S PROF PINCHAS COHEN: 'ATL1103 EXTENDS LIFE'**
- * **VENTUS \$40m IPO FOR SNORING, SLEEP APNOEA NASAL PLUGS**

MARKET REPORT

The Australian stock market fell 0.49 percent on Monday April 16, 2012 with the S&P ASX 200 down 21.0 points to 4,302.3 points.

Ten of the Biotech Daily Top 40 stocks were up, 16 fell, 11 traded unchanged and three were untraded.

Neuren was the best, up 0.3 cents or 13.0 percent to 2.6 cents with 2.6 million shares traded, followed by Avita up 11.4 percent to 24.5 cents with 528,946 shares traded.

Optiscan climbed 8.3 percent; Circadian, Genetic Technologies and Psivida were up more than six percent; Sunshine Heart was up 3.45 percent; Impedimed, Reva and Sirtex rose more than two percent; with Cochlear up 0.45 percent.

Cellmid led the falls, down 0.1 cents or 6.7 percent to 1.4 cents, with three million shares traded.

Benitec lost 5.3 percent; Bionomics, Clinuvel and Prana fell more than three percent; Pharmaxis, Phylogica and QRX shed two percent or more; Acrux, Biota, Prima, Resmed, Tissue Therapies, Universal Biosensors and Viralytics were down more than one percent; with CSL, Mesoblast and Starpharma down by less than one percent.

ANTISENSE THERAPEUTICS

Antisense advisor and University of Southern California dean-elect of gerontology Prof Pinchas Cohen says ATL1103 is the best drug candidate for acromegaly and extends life. Speaking via an internet conference in Sydney as a guest of Antisense, Prof Cohen said that ATL1103 targeted the growth hormone receptor in the brain's pituitary gland.

Prof Cohen said that in acromegaly a benign tumor in the gland increased amounts of growth hormone triggering an increase in insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1) leading in turn to the symptoms of the disease including enlarged hands and feet; as well as other illnesses such as diabetic retinopathy and some cancers.

Prof Cohen said that there was evidence that reducing growth hormone production also led to a reduction in diseases and promoted longer life.

He quoted studies of Laron dwarves showing a near zero rate for cancer compared to relatives without the syndrome and a study of Ashkenazi or Central European Jews who were older than 100 years who were smaller in stature than normal, as well as a study of centenarian Amish.

Prof Cohen said that although there were only 85,000 people with acromegaly in the developed world, they drove a \$1 billion market for drug treatments, with the added benefit that pharmaceutical treatments for the disease were conferred orphan drug status.

He said that standard treatments included surgery and radiotherapy as well as the somastatin agonist octreotide, and pegvisomant which was effective in 71 percent of patients.

But Prof Cohen said the ATL1103 had wider efficacy and was safe with no significant adverse events shown in mice, primates and phase I human trials.

Prof Cohen said that in mice and primates there was a dramatic reduction of IGF-1 by more than 50 percent, as well as a dramatic reduction of growth hormone receptor activity.

He said the phase Ia trial was a single ascending dose from 25mg to 400mg and the phase Ib trial of 12 patients was at 250mg, with eight active patients and four controls.

Prof Cohen said there was a 20 percent reduction of growth hormone binding protein.

Prof Cohen said that Antisense was finalizing plans for a definitive three-month phase II study at the 200mg and 400mg doses, which was expected to begin within two months and have results by mid-2013.

Prof Cohen said that unlike other drugs, it appeared that ATL1103 increased longevity through the suppression of the growth hormone receptor and could also have efficacy in cancer, diabetes and other illnesses.

"Growth hormone may be a central part of determining lifespan," Prof Cohen said.

"Suppression of growth hormone receptor could suppress or prevent cancer," Prof Cohen said.

Prof Cohen said current drugs for acromegaly had a range of disadvantages including daily dosing and expense, whereas ATL1103 was intended to have weekly administration.

"I would like to see more drugs for acromegaly but I think this is the best one and I don't see any major competitors coming in," Prof Cohen said.

He said he did not think ATL1103 would be approved for life-extension "but it is an attractive side-effect".

Antisense said that acromegalic patients had significantly higher blood IGF-1 levels than healthy individuals and the reduction of these levels to normal was accepted as the primary marker of an effective drug treatment for the disease.

The company said that the first line treatment for the disease was surgery, which could cause premature death due to an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease and cancer, and it was successful in about 50 percent of cases.

Antisense was unchanged at 1.7 cents with 3.4 million shares traded.

VENTUS MEDICAL

Ventus hopes to raise \$40 million through the issue of 80,000,000 shares at 50 cents each and list on the ASX to commercialize its nasal plugs for snoring and sleep apnoea.

The prospectus said the San Jose California-based Ventus said the shares would be Clearing House Electronic Subregister System (Chess) depositary interests (CDIs) with six CDIs to each US share and the total market capitalization after the US and Australian offers would be about \$150 million (BD: Mar 22, 2012).

Ventus chairman Jonathan Pinshaw said the Provent sleep apnoea therapy had been trialed on 750 people in 10 clinical trials and had US Food and Drug Administration clearance, Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration approval and Conformité Européenne (CE) mark approval.

Mr Pinshaw said the Provent snoring therapy was awaiting FDA approval expected by the end of 2012.

Mr Pinshaw said two existing shareholders De Novo Ventures and Mohr Davidow Ventures had "indicated their intention to subscribe for approximately \$US6.2 million of CDIs under the US private placement".

The US placement to existing shareholders is part of the \$40 million offer.

The prospectus said that Ventus had 36,615,874 US shares equivalent to 219,695,224 CDIs prior to the offers.

The prospectus said that Ventus would list under the proposed ASX code VNT.

The offer opens on April 23 and closes on May 11, 2012

The Sydney-based Inteq is the lead manager for the offer and the Sydney-based CCZ Statton Equities is the lead broker.

The prospectus is available at www.ventuspublicoffer.com.au.