



## **Clinical Candidate From PKB/AKT Collaboration With Astex Selected by AstraZeneca**

**Cambridge, UK, 7th January 2010**

Astex Therapeutics, the UK based biotechnology company developing targeted therapies for oncology, announced today that AstraZeneca has selected a clinical candidate from the Protein Kinase B (PKB, also known as Akt) inhibitor collaborative programme. The programme began in 2003 through Astex's collaboration with The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and Cancer Research Technology Limited (CRT).

AstraZeneca's collaboration with Astex on the drug discovery programme began in 2005. The selection of a promising clinical candidate triggers a significant milestone payment and Astex, the ICR and CRT are eligible to receive further milestones and royalties during clinical development and commercialisation of the candidate. AstraZeneca will be responsible for progressing the clinical candidate through clinical development and into the market.

PKB is one of the most exciting new molecular targets for the treatment of cancer, and is a key enzyme in the mTOR/PI3K/PKB tumour cell survival pathway, dysregulation of which is implicated in the emergence of resistance of certain cancers to many commonly used anti-cancer drugs.

This new clinical candidate is the second PKB inhibitor to be selected based on research carried out under the original agreement between Astex, ICR and CRT. AT13148, a PKB inhibitor identified from a chemical series that is distinct from the series which led to the new AstraZeneca candidate, is in preclinical development under the Clinical Development Partnerships programme of Cancer Research UK. Astex retains worldwide exclusive rights to AT13148.

Harren Jhoti, Chief Executive Officer of Astex, commented: "We are delighted that AstraZeneca has chosen to progress a candidate from this exciting programme towards the clinic. This selection of a second clinical candidate from one of our partnered programmes confirms the potential of the fragment-based drug discovery approach and the productivity of our platform, and underscores Astex's leadership position in this area."

Les Hughes, Vice President of AstraZeneca's Cancer Research Area said: "AstraZeneca is committed to the research and development of new, targeted anti-cancer therapies. We are delighted to add this new clinical candidate to the number we already have in development and look forward to seeing the results of key studies in the coming years."

Professor Paul Workman, Director of the Cancer Research UK Centre for Cancer Therapeutics at the ICR, added: "Scientists at The Institute of Cancer Research have been studying the PKB pathway for many years, as it is known to be important in tumour development, and were the first to determine the crystal structure of the PKB enzyme. We believe that PKB inhibitors could potentially block the growth of a wide range of cancers and are very pleased that AstraZeneca's decision to take this compound forward to clinical trials means that patients could soon benefit from this exciting new approach."

Dr Phil L'Huillier, CRT's Director of Business Management said: "This deal builds on a very successful collaboration between the academic and industrial sectors. It is pleasing to see, and important that the drug is being taken forward to establish if it might help to treat cancer patients."

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Editors Notes

About PKB/Akt

PKB/Akt is one of the most exciting new targets for the development of new classes of molecularly-targeted anti-cancer agents. The enzyme is an important component of one of the best-understood tumour survival pathways and one that is frequently activated in tumours as a result of disruption of the tumour suppressor PTEN. PKB/Akt is a protein ser/thr kinase that is activated by many growth factors and has key roles in both the growth and survival of many tumours as well as being implicated in resistance of tumours to chemotherapy.

Recently it has become clear that resistance to many therapeutic agents, as seen, for example, with EGFR kinase inhibitors and with cytotoxics such as doxorubicin and cisplatin is associated with an up-regulation of PKB activity by one or other of the above mechanisms. Thus, inhibitors of PKB have potential in both monotherapy and in combination with existing therapies.

#### About Astex Therapeutics

Astex is a UK-based biotechnology company that discovers and develops novel small molecule therapeutics. Using its pioneering fragment-based drug discovery platform Pyramid™, Astex has built a pipeline of five molecularly targeted oncology drugs, of which three are currently being tested in clinical trials and two are in pre-clinical development.

In addition to its proprietary research programmes, Astex's productivity in lead discovery has been endorsed through numerous partnerships with major pharmaceutical companies, including AstraZeneca, Bayer-Schering, Boehringer Ingelheim, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis and Johnson & Johnson.

For further information on Astex please visit the Company's website at [www.astex-therapeutics.com](http://www.astex-therapeutics.com)

#### About AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca is a major international healthcare business engaged in the research, development, manufacturing and marketing of meaningful prescription medicines and supplier for healthcare services. AstraZeneca is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies with healthcare sales of US\$ 31.6 billion and is a leader in gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, neuroscience, respiratory, oncology and infectious disease medicines. For more information about AstraZeneca, please visit: [www.astrazeneca.com](http://www.astrazeneca.com)

#### About The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR)

The ICR is Europe's leading cancer research centre.

The ICR has been ranked the UK's top academic research centre, based on the results of the Higher Education Funding Council's Research Assessment Exercise.

The ICR works closely with partner The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust to ensure patients immediately benefit from new research. Together the two organisations form the largest comprehensive cancer centre in Europe.

The ICR has charitable status and relies on voluntary income, spending 95 pence in every pound of total income directly on research.

As a college of the University of London, the ICR also provides postgraduate higher education of international distinction.

Over its 100-year history, the ICR's achievements include identifying the potential link between smoking and lung cancer which was subsequently confirmed, discovering that DNA damage is the basic cause of cancer and isolating more cancer-related genes than any other organisation in the world.

The ICR is home to the world's leading academic drug development team. Several important anti-cancer drugs used worldwide were synthesised at the ICR and it has discovered an average of two preclinical candidates each year over the past five years. For more information visit [www.icr.ac.uk](http://www.icr.ac.uk)

#### About Cancer Research Technology

Cancer Research Technology Limited (CRT) is a specialist commercialisation and development company, which aims to develop new discoveries in cancer research for the benefit of cancer patients. CRT works closely with leading international cancer scientists and their institutes to protect intellectual property arising from their research and to establish links with commercial partners. CRT facilitates the discovery, development and marketing of new cancer therapeutics, vaccines, diagnostics and enabling technologies. CRT is wholly owned by Cancer Research UK, the largest independent funder of cancer research in the world. Further information about CRT can be found at [www.cancertechnology.com](http://www.cancertechnology.com)

Further information about Cancer Research UK's Clinical Development Partnerships programme can be found at [www.clinicalpartnerships.com](http://www.clinicalpartnerships.com)