INSELGRUPPE

UNIVERSITÄT BERN

Media release

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Innosuisse:

Insel Gruppe receives grant for Covid vaccine research

Innosuisse, the Swiss Innovation Agency, grants support for an innovative research project on Covid-19. The research project of the Department of Pneumology at Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, will be carried out together with the Department for Biomedical Research at the University of Bern and the industry partner Mymetics SA in Epalinges. The preclinical study deals with nasal application of a virosomal Mymetics-owned vaccine.

Covid-19 vaccine research is currently a top priority at university hospitals, higher education institutions and private companies. Public attention is primarily focused on various vaccines as well as the race to market maturity. The present project centers on the aspect of its administration, namely with an application directly into the nasopharynx.

Innovative approach

The planned collaborative research will investigate in an animal model the efficacy and tolerability of the virosome-based Covid-19 vaccines for direct application in the nasopharynx on a preclinical level. As the participating company, Mymetics SA affiliate of Mymetics Corporation (MYMX) specializes in the research and development of vaccines based on virosome technology. Virosomes are small, virus look-alike particles, that can e.g. transport antigens to trigger immune reactions. Prof. Dr. med. Geiser, responsible as the research director, is very pleased about the promised funding: “We are confronted with an increasing number of Covid-19 patients and are very motivated to participate in the development of innovative vaccines and dosage forms. The research work at the University Hospital will receive an enormous boost due to the Innosuisse funds and the requisite recognition of research doctors on our teams.” The work will be carried out at the Department for Biomedical Research (DBMR) at the University of Bern by PD Dr. med. Amiq Gazdhar.
University hospital researcher Amiq Gazdhar is keen to start the project: “The idea to apply a vaccine directly to the nasal mucosa and to set up a reaction of antibodies and T cells locally to prevent SARS-CoV-2 from expanding further is compelling. Of course, this reaction needs to be controlled. The preclinical research with the virosomal vaccine will focus on provoking a reaction that is strong enough against the virus and at the same time harmless for the patient.”

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Research team

Innosuisse's innovation support is based on cooperation between higher education institutions, university-related research institutes and private-sector companies. In the present case, these are Insel Gruppe represented by the Department of Pneumology, University of Bern, which provides the DBMR research workplace and infrastructure, and Mymetics SA, a subsidiary of Mymetics Corp., which specializes in virosome-based vaccine development. The project partners anticipate that the cooperation between experts from pneumology, laboratory research and regulatory development will lead to faster and higher-quality data on the Covid-19 vaccine candidates under investigation.

Prospects

Work will begin as soon as possible. This is also made possible due to DBMR's extensive experience and competence. Ronald Kempers, CEO of Mymetics SA, is looking forward to working together with the specialists at the DBMR and the Bern University Hospital: "This Innosuisse funded collaboration is another example of our strategy to access expertise through collaborative approaches." Prof. Geiser adds: "The pressure to succeed in Covid-19 vaccine research is enormous. We are glad that we are able to play a part in contributing to generate results on a solid scientific level with the University Hospital and the University of Bern and hope the general public will soon benefit from a novel vaccine."

Experts:

- Prof. Dr. Thomas Geiser, Chairman and Chief Physician of Department of Pneumology at Inselspital, University hospital Bern.
- PD Dr. Amiq Gazdhar, Department for Biomedical Research, University of Bern
- Ronald Kempers, CEO Mymetics SA, Epalinges

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Links:

- Department of Pneumology, Bern University Hospital
- Department of Biomedical Research, University of Bern
- Mymetics SA, Mymetics Corp. (MYMX)
- Innosuisse, Swiss Innovation Agency

Insel Gruppe

The Insel Gruppe is Switzerland's leading group of hospitals for university and integrated medicine. It offers comprehensive health care based on groundbreaking quality, research, innovation and education. The six Insel Gruppe hospitals (Inselspital, Aarberg, Belp, Münsingen, Riggisberg and Tiefenau) carried out around 864 000 outpatient consultations and treated about 65 000 in-patients
in the financial year 2019. The Insel Gruppe employs almost 10 800 members of staff from 100 nations. It provides training for a large number of professions and is the most important institution for the further training of young physicians.

Department for Biomedical Reserch (DBMR)

The Department for BioMedical Research (DBMR) of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Bern, led by Prof. Dr. med. Mark Rubin, was established in 1994 by the University of Bern and the Inselspital (Bern University Hospital). To realize its mission to bridge the gap between bench and bedside, the DBMR promotes an integrative perspective to clinical research with a strong emphasis in the development of translational approaches, the use of omics and other cutting-edge technologies, and extensive interaction and collaboration between laboratory-based and patient-oriented clinical research. The DBMR is also committed to fostering the careers of young academics.

Mymetics

Mymetics Corporation (OTCQB:MYMX) is a Swiss based biotechnology company, with a research lab in the Netherlands, focused on the development of next-generation preventative vaccines for infectious and life disabling diseases. It currently has several vaccines in its pipeline, among which are the HIV-1/AIDS, intra-nasal influenza and malaria, and collaborative projects in the field of allergy immunotherapy and in oncology.
Mymetics' core technology and expertise are in the use of virosomes, lipid-based carriers containing functional fusion viral proteins and natural membrane proteins, in combination with rationally designed antigens. The company's vaccines are designed to induce protection against early transmission and infection, focusing on both the mucosal and serum immune response. For further information, please visit www.mymetics.com.