

20 November 2017

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Melbourne research institute in global cancer collaboration led by Swiss biotech firm**

Swiss biotech company TargImmune is announcing a new international research collaboration with Australia's oldest medical research institute, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, to progress the development of a cutting-edge cancer immunotherapy platform.

Building on the expertise of Professor Alexander Levitzki's 15-year development of this technology, leading Walter and Eliza Hall Institute cancer researcher Professor Tony Burgess will use TargImmune's novel drug platform for pre-clinical research at WEHI.

TargImmune CEO Dr Esteban Pombo-Villar said the company's proprietary technology platform involves a personalised approach to cancer immunotherapy in which a non-viral vector targets cancer cells to deliver a dual effect: cancer cell death and an immune response against the cancer.

The overall targeting technology is known as CTPIC ('Cancer Targeted delivery of pIC'). \*

"Targeted drugs that increase the immune system's defense, specifically against cancers, are at the forefront of cancer research and offer great potential for many clinical applications. TargImmune's platform could change the way we treat a range of cancers," said Mr Pombo-Villar.

Professor Levitzki – a recipient of the prestigious Wolf Prize in Medicine working in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem – collaborated with colleagues to invent the technology platform which is now used by TargImmune to develop novel anti-cancer drugs.

The biotech company was recently awarded a grant of almost \$US400,000 from the Swiss Commission of Technology and Innovation to support the research.

"I'm honoured to be working with such an esteemed group of scientists. Cancer has no bounds and sharing knowledge across borders will allow us to make significant advancements in the treatment of this insidious disease," said Professor Tony Burgess from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute.

Professor Burgess is one of the world's preeminent researchers in colorectal cancer. His research has focused on the effects of gene mutations and the receptors on cancer cells that drive bowel cancer.

"I strongly believe that major improvements in cancer therapy will come from targeted drug treatment platforms, which combine a range of different therapies and medications. We all



have a piece of the puzzle and by coming together in this TargImmune collaboration we can see how all the pieces fit together,” said Professor Burgess.

Swiss-based TargImmune which has a number of research collaborations globally, has recently established several close links with Australia, and in July announced a joint venture with ASX-listed pharmaceutical company Race Oncology.

“TargImmune is exploring the use of Race Oncology’s broad-spectrum chemotherapy drug, Bisantrene, in our cancer treatment platform. The reduced cardiotoxicity of Bisantrene makes it an ideal chemotherapy agent to use in conjunction with our CTPIC platform,” said Dr Pombo-Villar.

TargImmune has recently engaged Dr Linda Friedland to represent the company with its Australian operations.

TargImmune Therapeutics AG was established in March 2016 in Basel, Switzerland to research and develop CTPIC, an innovative immunotherapy technology in the fight against cancer. It has a mandate to engage world leading cancer research centers with specialized expertise to collaborate in the clinical trials and development of this novel therapy for head & neck, colorectal, brain and other deadly cancers.

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\* The TargImmune technology platform, originally discovered in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, encompasses a proprietary non-viral vector to target receptors that are overexpressed on cancer cells, such as those found in breast cancer and several other important cancers. Once at the target cell, the vector delivers an immune-modulating agent (poly-IC or pIC) into the cell, which then triggers apoptosis (programmed cell death) and an immune response against the cancer. The overall targeting technology is known as CTPIC ('Cancer Targeted delivery of pIC').

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### **About TargImmune Therapeutics AG**

TargImmune Therapeutics AG is a private Swiss-based biotechnology firm focused on drug development using novel targeted immunotherapies. The company's principal technology is the CTPIC technology platform that utilises a proprietary non-viral vector to target and destroy cancer cells that over-express certain receptors.

### **About The Walter and Eliza Institute**

The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research has more than 850 researchers who are working to understand, prevent and treat diseases including blood, breast and bowel cancers, type 1 diabetes, arthritis, coeliac disease and malaria. More than 100 national and international clinical trials are underway based on research undertaken at the Institute. These include trials of vaccines for diabetes, coeliac disease and malaria; trials of new anti-inflammatory agents; and trials of a new class of anti-cancer treatments, called BH3-mimetics, for treating people with leukaemia and other cancers.

### **About Race Oncology Limited**

Race Oncology is a specialty pharmaceutical company, whose business model is to pursue later stage assets, principally in the cancer field. The Company's first asset is a chemotherapy drug, Bisantrone, which was the subject of more than 40 phase II clinical studies during the 1980s and 1990s. Race Oncology owns recent patent filings on Bisantrone and has secured Orphan Drug Designation in the US. The Company's goal is to complete final development of Bisantrone and bring this valuable drug to market.

## **Biographies**

### **Dr Esteban Pombo-Villar**

Dr Esteban Pombo-Villar spent more than 20 years with Basel-based pharmaceutical giant Novartis. During his time at Novartis Dr Pombo-Villar had several roles, the most recent of which was head of alliance management at the Novartis Institute for Biomedical Research (NIBR), where he focused creating and managing the company's collaborative efforts. He initially joined Sandoz Neuroscience Research in 1988 to work on drug discovery projects and to investigate the potential of emerging technologies and remained at the company following Sandoz' merger with Ciba-Geigy in 1996 to form Novartis. He was Chief Operating Officer at Oxford BioTherapeutics, a British biotech company, for 4 years.

### **Professor Tony Burgess**

Professor Tony Burgess is a Laboratory Head at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. After post-doctoral studies at Cornell University and the Weizmann Institute, he returned to The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute to study the growth factors which stimulate blood cell formation. He is attempting to develop improved approaches to cancer therapy through the use of EGF receptor inhibitors. He has an active research program on the



molecular basis of colon cancer, in particular the biology and molecular biology of the apc protein.

**Professor Alexander Levitzki**

Professor Alexander Levitzki is an Israeli biochemist who is a professor of biochemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Levitzki is well known for his work on the regulation of enzymes and trans-membrane signaling. Levitzki pioneered the development specific chemical inhibitors of cancer-induced protein tyrosine kinases. In 1990, he was awarded the Israel Prize, in life sciences. In 2005, he was awarded the Wolf Prize in Medicine for "pioneering signal transduction therapy and for developing tyrosine kinase inhibitors as effective agents against cancer and a range of other diseases".