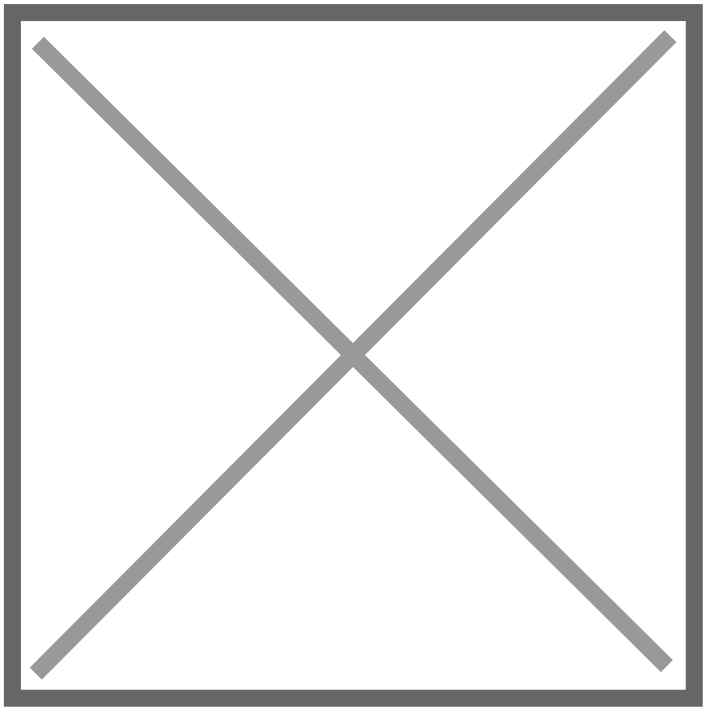
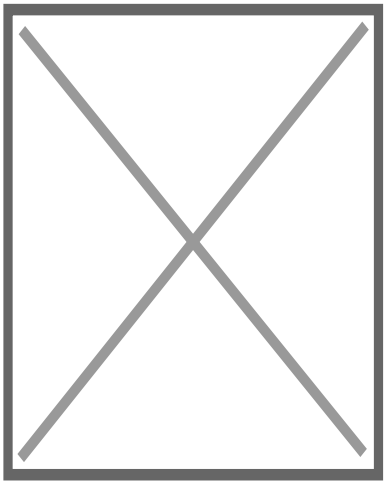
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'We're on to small oncomolecules'

10 April 2007 | News



'We're on to small oncomolecules'



*-Jan-Anders Karlsson, CEO of S*Bio*

*S*Bio is Singapore's first fully integrated drug discovery company. Last year, it became the first homegrown company to develop a cancer compound. In January 2007, it opened a subsidiary in California to globalize its clinical development programs. The company counts Genome Institute of Singapore, Institute of Cell and Molecular Biology and Karolinska Institutet among its key research partners. BioSpectrum met up with Jan-Anders Karlsson, CEO of S*Bio for a one-on-one interview. Some excerpts:*

Could you tell us about the history of S*Bio?

S*Bio is a JV between Singapore's Economic Development Board and Chiron Corporation. As Novartis bought over Chiron last year, they have become our second shareholders. We started as a drug discoveryand target validation genomics company. Over a period of five years, we beefed up our research capabilities and established ourselves as a strong research-focused company.

From 2005, we expanded our focus from pure play drug discovery to development zeroing in on small molecule oncology. Our ambition is to become a fully-integrated biotech company in Asia. Currently, we are working on targeted therapies, oncology and developing new drugs.

What are the focus areas of research for S*Bio?

Our key focus areas are kinases and HDAC (Histone Deacetylases), epigenetic control of cell functions or proliferations. Our expertise is in understanding the biology of different kinase pathways and in understanding the importance of epigenomic regulation of HDAC enzymes. We developed our first preclinical development candidate, a HDAC inhibitor, SB939 in 2005. SB939 is Singapore's first homegrown clinical candidate to be developed as a novel targeted cancer therapy. It belongs to a novel series of targeted small molecule based anti-cancer agents that inhibit HDAC, enzymes that are important regulators of pro-apoptotic factors and proteins involved in cell cycle progression and differentiation.

We have filed for an IND-equivalent in Singapore and are awaiting approval to start clinical trials. We are hoping to initiate the multiple phase I trials to begin in Singapore and North America later this year.

Do you have any regional presence?

Currently, we work out of Singapore. We do not have any regional offices in Asia. However, we have working relationships with chemistry outsourcing companies in China and India.

Tell us about your new subsidiary in the US?

We started the US operations to internationalize our clinical development capabilities. We wanted to be in close proximity with regulatory bodies such as FDA. Through our new office in California, we would like to expand our clinical development capabilities and competencies. This will also give us a platform to further develop our operations and presence in the US market. Currently, our US team is working on two compounds-JAK 2 for cancer and myloproliferative disorders and CDK/FLT 3, another type of kinase for
blood tumors.

Who are your collaboration partners?

In Singapore, we work with Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS) for biomarker discovery and diagnostics and Institute of Cell and Molecular Biology (IMCB) to discover and develop multiple compounds for cancer treatment. Outside of Singapore, we have signed a research collaboration with Karolinska Institutet, a prominent Swedish medical university, for its histone deacetylase (HDAC) program. This agreement has provided an exciting opportunity to evaluate our novel and proprietary HDAC inhibitors in the treatment of colorectal cancers and to investigate the underlying mechanisms of the development of gastrointestinal polyps and tumors.

What are your plans for the company?

Over the next few years, we would like to be a public company, as that would give us resources to grow pipeline and become a significant player in oncology.

Krishna Vilasini Bharadwaj