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AstraZeneca has announced a global license agreement with Synairgen worth \$232 million for its anti-asthmatic drug (SNG001), still in clinical development. Synairgen Plc is an AIM-listed UK company specialising in respiratory drug development.

SNG001 is an inhaled interferon beta medicine that was originally invented at the University of Southampton, southern England. It supports the immune system by correcting a deficiency which makes patients vulnerable to respiratory tract viral infections. It also provides the pharma major with an opportunity to expand the clinical program in other pulmonary diseases including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Under the terms of the exclusive license agreement, AstraZeneca will pay Synairgen \$7.25 million as an up-front fee and further \$225 million when potential development, regulatory and commercial milestones are reached. AstraZeneca will be responsible for future development costs of the drug.

The company will commence Phase IIa study in patients with severe asthma, building on available clinical data from an initial Phase IIa trial in a broad asthma population.

Mr Maarten Kraan, head of Respiratory, Inflammation and Autoimmune Innovative Medicines, AstraZeneca, said, "Respiratory disease is a core therapeutic area for AstraZeneca, and a key growth platform for the company. Our approach includes addressing associated complications that patients experience, as well as developing treatments for the underlying diseases. SNG001 is an innovative and targeted therapy that has, if successful, the potential to offer a step-change in the treatment of severe asthma, and possibly COPD."

Mr Richard Marsden, Synairgen CEO, commented, "We're delighted that this truly innovative program, discovered at the University of Southampton and developed by Synairgen, will be taken forward by AstraZeneca. With its strong research focus and extensive experience in respiratory disease, AstraZeneca's commitment to developing novel medicines for patients with asthma and COPD makes them an ideal partner for developing SNG001."