

Merck acquires OncoEthix

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Merck has announced that it has acquired, through a subsidiary, OncoEthix, a Swiss-based biotechnology company specialising in oncology drug development. Through the acquisition, Merck has gained an investigational, novel oral BET (bromodomain) inhibitor, OTX015, which is currently in Phase 1b studies for the treatment of hematological malignancies and advanced solid tumors.

"Oncology is a priority area of focus for Merck and the acquisition of OncoEthix supports our strategy to prioritize the development of innovative molecules with the potential to improve the treatment of advanced cancers," said Dr Roy Baynes, senior vice president, global clinical development, Merck Research Laboratories. He added, "The potential first-in-class oral BET inhibitor, OTX015, has demonstrated early promising activity in hematological cancers and strategically complements our broad immuno-oncology development program."

According to Mr Bertrand Damour, chief executive officer, OncoEthix, "We are delighted that OTX015 will now be in the hands of Merck, a company with a successful track record of developing cutting-edge therapies. The acquisition underlines the promise that OTX015 has shown in the treatment of hematological malignancies, and the potential it has for the treatment of advanced solid tumors. We are confident that our transaction with Merck best positions OTX015 to be developed to its full potential in areas of high unmet medical need."

Financial terms of the acquisition include an upfront payment of up to \$110 million to OncoEthix. Additional milestone payments of up to \$265 million are contingent upon certain clinical and regulatory events being achieved.