Biotech Daily

Monday May 21, 2012

Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

*** ASX UP, BIOTECH EVEN: BENITEC UP 12.5%, CELLMID DOWN 12%**

*** MELANOMA INSTITUTE: GSK'S DABRAFENIB SHRINKS BRAIN TUMORS**

*** PHARMAXIS FILES BRONCHITOL FOR CYSTIC FIBROSIS NDA TO FDA**

*** PETER TURVEY REPLACES ALLIED HEALTH DIRECTOR JET SOEDIRDJA**

*** VICTORIA AWARDS OPEN: 2 PRIZES, 12 FELLOWSHIPS**

*** BOOTS LAUNCHES PHOSPHAGENICS' ANTI-FAT CREAM IN UK**

*** OBJ CLAIMS PROCTER & GAMBLE DEAL, NO DETAILS**

*** FLUOROTECHNICS VOTES TO GO MINING, SUSPENDED**

MARKET REPORT

The Australian stock market recovered 0.67 percent on Monday May 21, 2012 with the S&P ASX 200 up 27.1 points to 4,073.6 points.

Fourteen of the Biotech Daily Top 40 stocks were up, 15 fell, five traded unchanged and six were untraded.

Benitec was the best, up 0.2 cents or 12.5 percent to 1.8 cents with 2.9 million shares traded, followed by Avita up 8.5 percent to 25.5 cents with 238,416 shares traded.

Tissue Therapies climbed 7.9 percent; Bioniche was up 5.3 percent; Phylogica was up 4.2 percent; Bionomics, Phosphagenics, Prana, Prima, Sunshine Heart and Universal Biosensors were up more than three percent; Acrux and Alchemia rose more than two percent; CSL was up 1.2 percent; with Clinuvel up 0.3 percent.

Cellmid led the falls, down 0.2 cents or 11.8 percent to 1.5 cents with 1.3 million shares traded, followed by Patrys down 10.7 percent to 2.5 cents with 52,700 shares traded.

Antisense and Starpharma lost more than six percent; Anteo fell 5.8 percent; Neuren was down 4.2 percent; Genetic Technologies and Viralytics were down more than three percent; Cochlear, Genera and Pharmaxis shed more than two percent; Mesoblast Resmed and Sirtex were down more than one percent; with Biota, Heartware and Reva down by less than one percent.

MELANOMA INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA, GLAXOSMITHKLINE

A Glaxosmithkline-funded, Sydney-based trial of BRAF-inhibitor dabrafenib with 10 melanoma patients has extended life and reduced brain tumor size.

A media release from the Melanoma Institute Australia and the Westmead Millennium Institute said that with researchers from the Westmead Hospital and the University of Sydney, that dabrafenib showed an ability to shrink secondary tumors in the brains of patients with advanced forms of melanoma.

The article, 'Dabrafenib in patients with melanoma, untreated brain metastases, and other solid tumours: a phase I dose-escalation trial' was published in The Lancet and abstract is at: www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2812%2960398-5/abstract.

The Melanoma Institute media release said that the drug could add months to the lives of patients whose melanoma has spread to the brain.

The Institute said that most patients with brain metastases died within four months, but in a sub-group of 10 patients in its 184-patient trial, the tumors in the brains of nine patients shrank within the first six weeks.

The Institute said that all 10 patients survived beyond five months, two patients survived beyond 12 months and one patient was alive at 19 months.

In 2010, Glaxosmithkline said it was ready to begin a phase III trial of GSK2118436 (dabrafenib), a BRAF-inhibitor for melanoma, which had received public attention following early results that produced a "very significant reduction in tumor size" and a "nearly 80 percent partial remission rate" for the difficult to treat cancer (BD: Nov 16, 2010).

A Glaxosmithkline spokeswoman told Biotech Daily that her company's trial was separate from the Melanoma Institute trial, which was run by the Institute and researchers, with support from Glaxosmithkline for the trial.

In its media release the Melanoma Institute said that dabrafenib targeted the BRAF gene mutation, which was present in 50 percent of human melanomas and worked by binding to the activated mutant form of the BRAF protein in the melanoma cell, causing the cell to stop proliferating and in many cases it shrank and disappeared.

The Institute said that the study focused on the most common BRAF gene mutation (V600E) and a particular type of the mutation (V600K) that was common in Australians, where cumulative UV exposure from the sun was higher than other parts of the world.

The lead author of the study, Melanoma Institute, Westmead Hospital and the University of Sydney's Dr Georgina Long said the trial was "the first evidence that we have a systemic drug therapy that helps prolong survival in patients with multiple melanoma brain metastases".

"The findings are among the most important in the history of drug treatment for melanoma," Dr Long said. "Currently there is no effective systemic treatment for melanoma brain metastases and patients whose cancer has spread to the brain are frequently excluded from promising clinical trials," Dr Long said.

"Until now, there has not been a single drug that has shrunk brain metastases in more than 10 out of 100 patients with metastatic melanoma," Dr Long said. "This drug had a 90 percent success rate in reducing the size of brain metastases," Dr Long said.

"Brain metastases in melanoma are a major unsolved problem," Dr Long said. "Until now, melanoma has been notoriously resistant to drug therapy in general, and responses in highly lethal brain metastases are particularly uncommon.

"Providing these early data are supported in larger cohorts of patients and durable responses are confirmed, this activity in the brain may assist in addressing a large unmet need in patients with metastatic melanoma worldwide," Dr Long said.

"Historically, researchers have been reluctant to concentrate on brain metastases because the survival period is so short," Dr Long said.

PHARMAXIS

Pharmaxis has submitted a new drug application to the Food and Drug Administration for Bronchitol for the treatment of patients with cystic fibrosis.
Pharmaxis said the FDA had previously granted Bronchitol orphan drug designation for the treatment of patients with cystic fibrosis.
The company said the submission was supported by two phase III clinical trials conducted in 600 patients with cystic fibrosis and the integrated data reported significant improvements in lung function combined with reductions in exacerbation incidence.
The use of Bronchitol for cystic fibrosis has been approved in both Australia and Europe (BD: Feb 8, 2011; Apr 20, 2012).
Pharmaxis chief executive officer Dr Alan Robertson said the submission was “the second of two key milestones for the Bronchitol program following approval last month to market the product in Europe”.
Pharmaxis fell 2.5 cents or 2.3 percent to $1.08.

ALLIED HEALTHCARE GROUP

Allied Health has appointed former CSL executive Peter Turvey as a non-executive director, replacing stockbroker Handojo (Jet) Soedirdja.
Allied chairman Chris Catlow said that Mr Turvey’s experience in global healthcare and licencing would be “a great benefit to the Allied Healthcare Group board”.
The company said that Mr Turvey worked at CSL for 19 years, initially as the first corporate counsel, was appointed company secretary in 1998 and was responsible for the management and licencing of CSL's intellectual property portfolio and risk management.
The company said that Mr Turvey was involved in many licencing deals, notably the human papillomavirus vaccine Gardasil licenced to Merck & Co.
Allied said that Mr Turvey was a principal at Foursight Associates and a director of Starpharma and Ausbiotech.
Allied Health was unchanged at 2.6 cents.

VICTORIA GOVERNMENT

The Victoria Government says applications are open for the 2012 Victoria Prize for Science and Innovation and the 2012 Victoria Fellowships.
Victoria’s Minister for Innovation Louise Asher said the State Government was committed to supporting discovery and development in research and innovation and had doubled the number of Victoria Prize and Victoria Fellowships on offer.
“The Coalition Government believes there is immense scientific and research talent to reward and promote in Victoria and that is why we made an election commitment to double the number of awards,” Ms Asher said.
“The Victoria Prize for Science and Innovation will recognize two outstanding scientists this year for their lifelong commitment and achievements,” Ms Asher said.
“Two individual awards of $50,000 each will be presented - one for work in life sciences and one for work in physical sciences Ms Asher said, “
“As part of the Victoria Fellowships, the Coalition Government will provide $18,000 to up to 12 outstanding early-career researchers and innovators to enhance their careers with international study missions,” Ms Asher said.
A Victoria Government media release said that applications would close on June 29, 2012, with application forms available at: www.business.vic.gov.au/vicprize or www.business.vic.gov.au/vicfellows.

PHOSPHAGENICS

Phosphagenics says its Bodyshaper anti-fat cream will be launched in the United Kingdom on June 1, 2012 through the Boots retail chain.
Phosphagenics said the launch was timed to take advantage of the Northern Hemisphere summer and would be supported by a comprehensive marketing and local public relations campaign.
Phosphagenics chief executive officer Dr Esra Ogru said that launching the company's "top selling Bodyshaper product, which is part of our Bioelixia range, to a global retailer like Boots is a coup for our company".
Bodyshaper includes AOP9604 (then known as AOD9604) which Phosphagenics has licenced from Calzada (BD: Sep 22, 2010).
"This should assure investors our Bioelixia brand is gaining international acceptance and is rapidly expanding as a global brand by offering innovative and effective products," Dr Ogru said.
Dr Ogru said that the superior delivery of key cosmetic ingredients using Phosphagenics' tocopheryl phosphate mixture or TPM technology enabled Bioelixia products to be differentiated from cosmetics competitors.
Phosphagenics said that Boots had an online market as well as physical shops.
Phosphagenics was up half a cent or 3.2 percent to 16 cents with 1.5 million shares traded.

OBJ

OBJ says it has an exclusive multi-product joint development agreement with Procter and Gamble to investigate products using its magnetic enhanced transdermal technologies.
OBJ said the two companies began collaborations more than one year ago and the two companies would jointly evaluate the application of its micro-array technologies with Procter and Gamble products.
The company said the agreement followed the completion of a series of proof-of-principle studies to determine the most suitable commercial opportunities for the technology.
OBJ director Glyn Denison said the agreement was "a significant milestone in the company's progression from technology development to commercial application".
OBJ did not provide any details on the commercial value of the agreement.
OBJ was up 0.1 cents or 5.6 percent to 1.9 cents with 10.7 million shares traded.

FLUOROTECHNICS

Fluorotechnics has requested a suspended from quotation, following overwhelming shareholder approval to acquire Lamboo Resources and McKintosh Resources.
Fluorotechnics said that shareholders voted by more than 27.4 million proxy votes in favor and 4,571 proxy votes against to approve all resolutions including a change of name to Lamboo Resources and a change in the scale and nature of the company's activities.
Fluorotechnics was developing fluorescent gels for protein research and raised $8 million in its initial public offer at $1 a share (BD: Sep 4, 2008; Sep 9, 2011; Feb 14, 2012).
Fluorotechnics last traded at 1.5 cents.