Biotech Daily

Thursday April 11, 2013

Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

*** ASX, BIOTECH UP: PHYLOGICA UP 10.5%, IMPEDIMED DOWN 10%**

*** IMMUNEXPRESS JOINS DUTCH CONSORTIUM FOR SEPSIS DETECTION**

*** MEI (NOVOGEN) ME-344 ACTIVE AGAINST OVARIAN CANCER IN MICE**

*** NOVOGEN REQUESTS CAPITAL RAISING TRADING HALT**

*** PHARMAXIS Q3 SALES EVEN**

*** SUNSHINE HEART TO RAISE UP TO $71m**

*** ECO QUEST'S CYNATA LICENCES ITS STEM CELL TECHNOLOGY**

*** BENITEC APPOINTS EX-CEPHALON CEO KEVIN BUCHI DIRECTOR**

MARKET REPORT

The Australian stock market climbed 0.79 percent on Thursday April 11, 2013 with the S&P ASX 200 up 39.1 points to 5,007.1 points.

Twenty of the Biotech Daily Top 40 stocks were up, eight fell, nine traded unchanged and three were untraded.

Phylogica was the best, up 0.2 cents or 10.5 percent to 2.1 cents with 465,000 shares traded.

Benitec and Viralytics climbed more than seven percent; Circadian and Clinuvel were up more than five percent; Avita, Optiscan and Osprey were up more than four percent; Cellmid, GI Dynamics, Neuren and Tissue Therapies were up three percent or more; Acrux, CSL, Living Cell and Universal Biosensors rose more than two percent; Mesoblast, Pharmaxis, Prima, Resmed and Starpharma were up more than one percent; with Heartware up by 0.9 percent.

Impedimed led the falls, down 0.9 cents or 10.2 percent to 7.9 cents, with 115,000 shares traded.

Phosphagenics lost four percent; Atcor shed 2.2 percent; Alchemia, Bionomics, Cochlear, and Genetic Technologies were down more than one percent; with QRX and Sirtex down by less than one percent.

IMMUNEXPRESS

Immunexpress says it will collaborate with the Molecular Diagnosis and Risk Stratification of Sepsis Consortium to develop early diagnosis and prognosis of sepsis technologies.

Immunexpress was founded in Brisbane as Athlomics, is based in Seattle, Washington and describes itself as a molecular diagnostic company focusing on patients with, or at risk of, sepsis.

The company said its core competency was the clinical validation of genomic and proteomic biomarkers and the translation of novel biomarkers into clinical diagnostic and monitoring assays for readily available platforms, including point-of-care.

Immunexpress said that the Molecular Diagnosis and Risk Stratification of Sepsis Consortium was established by the Netherlands-based Center for Translational Molecular Medicine to improve clinical outcomes and reduce health care costs associated with sepsis, the leading non-coronary cause of death in intensive care units.

Immunexpress said that each day an estimated 1,400 patients died from sepsis.

The company said the Consortium had a budget of EUR14 million ($A17.4 million) of which 50 percent was provided by the Dutch Government.

Immunexpress chief executive officer Dr Roslyn Brandon said that her company and the Consortium partners shared a purpose “to reduce the number of patients who die from sepsis through new and innovative methods of detection and patient management”.

“We … look forward to contributing our expertise in immune system monitoring and the commercial molecular diagnostic development process,” Dr Brandon said.

Immunexpress said that the project was enrolling patients in the largest clinical study of sepsis to date, with more than 7,000 patients admitted to intensive care units at the University of Amsterdam and University of Utrecht of which about one-third would have or would develop sepsis.

The Consortium’s principal investigator Prof Tom van der Poll said the goal was to “improve the care of sepsis patients by developing rapid bedside tests that allow a better and more rapid diagnosis and risk stratification”.

“With the accession of Immunexpress we expect to accomplish our goals faster,” Prof van der Poll said.

Immunexpress said that there were 18 million cases of diagnosed sepsis per year globally, with the incidence rising at up to 10 percent a year.

The company said that patients at risk of sepsis included infants, mothers after childbirth, the elderly, those with weakened immune systems or those who have experienced significant trauma/injury, invasive surgery, or burns, but healthy people could also develop sepsis.

Immunexpress said that early diagnosis and early, targeted treatment improved survival, but existing diagnostics were pathogen-focused, insensitive with an up to 50 percent failure rate, and took more than 24 hours for test results.

The company said that clinicians had difficulty with current diagnostic distinguishing sepsis from systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS), which was an inflammatory state that presented very much like sepsis, but was not caused by infection.

The company said that new technologies to allow for earlier detection and personalized management of patients with, or at risk of, sepsis could significantly reduce the financial burden on healthcare systems worldwide through reduced patient mortality; reduced stays in intensive care units and hospitals; fewer missed cases in the emergency setting; more targeted use of antibiotics and anti-inflammatories; reduced antimicrobial resistance; and reduced at-risk admissions.

Immunexpress is a private company.

MEI PHARMA (FORMERLY MARSHALL EDWARDS)

MEI Pharma says its mitochondrial inhibitor ME-344 decreases tumor burden and delays recurrence in a mouse model of recurrent epithelial ovarian cancer.
MEI Pharma said the data was presented in a poster entitled 'ME-344 delays tumor kinetics in an ovarian cancer in-vivo recurrence model' by Yale University School of Medicine's Dr Ayesha Alvero at the American Association for Cancer Research meeting in Washington, DC.
ME-344 was originally licenced to Marshall Edwards by Novogen and was described as an active metabolite of Novogen's NV-128.
Novogen chief executive officer Dr Graham Kelly told Biotech Daily that ME-344 was the last drug candidate developed by his company before it shut down the drug design program and was sold entirely to MEI Pharma, with no further payments due.
The poster is at: http://www.meipharma.com/sites/default/files/Alvero_AACR_2013.pdf.
Last night on the Nasdaq, MEI was up 18 US cents or 2.2 percent to $US8.23.

NOVOGEN

Novogen has requested a trading halt "pending an announcement … in relation to a proposed material capital raising".
Trading will resume on April 15, 2013 or on an earlier announcement.
Novogen last traded at 20.5 cents.

PHARMAXIS

Pharmaxis says that sales of Aridol and Bronchitol were up 1.8 percent to $853,000 for the three months to March 31, 2013 compared to the previous three months.
Receipts from customers for the three months to March 31, fell 1.3 percent to $989,000 compared to the previous quarter.
Pharmaxis chief financial officer David McGarvey told Biotech Daily that year-to-date sales of Aridol were up and increased sales of Bronchitol in Germany were offset by a fall in Australia over the Summer holiday period.
Pharmaxis said the phase III trial of Bronchitol for bronchiectasis had completed dosing with results expected by July 2013 and it was awaiting discussions with the US Food and Drug Administration on the design of a further trial of Bronchitol for cystic fibrosis.
Pharmaxis said it had $73,000,000 in cash at March 31, 2013.
Pharmaxis was up half a cent or 1.5 percent to 34 cents with 1.6 million shares traded.

SUNSHINE HEART

Sunshine Heart hopes to raise up to $US75,000,000 ($A71,337,462) for its pivotal trial of the C-Pulse aorta cuff for heart failure as well as general purposes.
In a 'shelf registration' document filed to the ASX and US Securities and Exchange Commission, Sunshine Heart said its share price on the Nasdaq at the close of April 9, 2013 was $US6.07 ($A5.77).
Each US common share is equivalent to 200 Australian Chess depositary interests.
Sunshine Heart requested a trading halt "pending an announcement by the company in relation to the pricing of the proposed material capital raising announced today".
Trading will resume on April 15, 2103 or on an earlier announcement.
The company said that Canaccord Genuity was the manager for the offering.
Sunshine Heart last traded at 2.8 cents.

ECO QUEST

Eco Quest says that 27-percent subsidiary Cynata has signed a licence agreement with the University of Wisconsin Madison to commercialize stem cell platform technology.
Eco Quest said the licence provided Cynata with exclusive rights to the mesenchymo-angioblast technology developed by Cynata director and major shareholder Prof Igor Slukvin in his research role at the University of Wisconsin Madison (BD: Feb 6, 2013).
The company said the licence was between Cynata and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, the licencing and patenting arm of the University of Wisconsin Madison.
Eco Quest said that the Foundation had a family of patents that protected the technology covered by the agreement.
Eco Quest was up 0.3 cents or 25 percent to 1.5 cents with 2.1 million shares traded.

BENITEC BIOPHARMA

Benitec says it has appointed former Cephalon chief executive officer Kevin Buchi as a director.
Benitec said that Mr Buchi was Cephalon's chief executive officer through its acquisition by Teva Pharmaceutical in October 2011 and continued with Teva as vice-president of branded products
The company said Mr Buchi joined Cephalon in 1991 and rose from head of business development and chief financial officer to chief operating officer and chief executive officer.
Benitec said Mr Buchi was currently a director of Stemline Therapeutics, Forward Pharma A/S and Alexza Pharmaceuticals.
The company said that Mr Buchi previously served as a director of Mesoblast, Lorus Therapeutics, Encysive Pharmaceuticals and Celator Pharmaceuticals.
Benitec said that Mr Buchi trained as a synthetic organic chemist for the Eastman Kodak company graduating from Cornell University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in chemistry and held a Master's degree in management from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management.
Benitec was up 0.1 cents or 7.7 percent to 1.4 cents.