Biotech Daily

Thursday March 23, 2017

Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

*** ASX, BIOTECH UP: USCOM UP 5%, NEUREN DOWN 9%**

*** BIOTRON: 'POSITIVE PHASE II HIV RESULTS WILL LEAD TO LICENCE'**

*** PARADIGM COMPETES PPS FOR HAY FEVER TREATMENT**

*** BARD1 CLAIMS 92% ACCURACY FOR OVARIAN CANCER TEST**

*** ZELDA TO TRIAL CANNABIS FOR INSOMNIA, ECZEMA IN CHILE**

*** US PATENT FOR BARD1 LUNG, COLORECTAL CANCER TECHNOLOGY**

*** CRESO PHARMA REQUESTS CAPITAL RAISING TRADING HALT**

*** HUNTER HALL'S ASSOCIATES CEASE LINKED AVITA HOLDING**

MARKET REPORT

The Australian stock market bounced back 0.41 percent on Thursday March 23, 2017, with the ASX200 up 23.5 points to 5,708.0 points.

Fifteen of the Biotech Daily Top 40 stocks were up, 10 fell, 14 traded unchanged and one was untraded.

Uscom was the best, up one cent or 5.3 percent to 20 cents with 36,331 shares traded.

Living Cell climbed 4.55 percent; Atcor and Benitec were up more than three percent; Impedimed, Orthocell and Viralytics rose more than two percent; Actinogen, Airxpanders, Compumedics, Oncosil, Pro Medicus, Resmed and Universal Biosensors were up one percent or more; with Cochlear, Medical Developments and Psivida up by less than one percent.

Yesterday's best, Neuren, led the falls, down 0.8 cents or 9.2 percent to 7.9 cents with 6.6 million shares traded.

IDT lost 3.7 percent; Sirtex shed 2.2 percent; Acrux, Admedus and Cyclopharm were down more than one percent; with Clinuvel, CSL, Ellex, Nanosonics and Starpharma down by less than one percent.

BIOTRON

Biotron chief executive officer Dr Michelle Miler says she expects results from the company's phase II BIT225 combination treatment for HIV by October 2017.
Dr Miller said that if the results from the 36-patient, Bangkok, Thailand-based trial were positive the company would expect to licence the drug to a major pharmaceutical company (BD: Feb 13, 2017).
In Melbourne to meet investors, Dr Miller told Biotech Daily that despite the advances in treatments for HIV/AIDS, major pharmaceutical companies were very interested in technologies that could completely eradicate the virus, rather than just suppress it, as current treatments do.
Dr Miller said that unlike drugs for hepatitis C which effectively eradicated the virus from the patient, the human immunodeficiency virus secreted itself throughout the body and current treatments did not eradicate it.
Dr Miller said that previous BIT225 trials had shown the compound to be effective in destroying the virus in the "reservoirs" throughout the body.
She said that the trial was comparing 200mg/day BIT225 in combination with anti-retroviral therapy in 27 patients, against nine patients on anti-retroviral therapy alone.
Dr Miller said the treatment period would run for 12 weeks with a 12 week follow up.
She said that if the drop in viral count seen in humanized mice was repeated in humans the company expected to enter negotiations for a licence.
Dr Miller said that Biotron had developed BIT225 for both HIV and hepatitis C and in the developed world it had been overtaken by 12-week oral courses for hepatitis C.
Dr Miller said it was a different matter in China, which had very high rates of hepatitis B and the anti-hepatitis C drugs reactivated the hepatitis B virus.
She said China remained a potential market for BIT225 in combination with interferon and ribavirin, because that combination did not reactivate hepatitis B.
Dr Miller said that the company's core technology targeted viroporins which were a class of viral proteins present in influenza, hepatitis C, Dengue fever, sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), HIV, Epstein Barr virus and Zika virus.
She said that Biotron had a library of 350 compounds it was screening against a wide range of viruses and in particular was testing for activity against respiratory illnesses.
Dr Miller said the company had $1.4 million in cash at December 31, 2016 and received a Federal Research and Development Tax Incentive payment of $1.6 million in February.
Biotron's cash burn for the three months to December 31, 2016 was $852,000.
Biotron fell 0.1 cents or 2.9 percent to 3.4 cents.

PARADIGM BIOPHARMACEUTICALS

Paradigm says it has completed treatment in its 80-patient phase IIa trial of pentosan polysulfate sodium (PPS) for allergic rhinitis, or hay fever.
Paradigm said the double blind, placebo controlled, cross-over, allergen-challenge study was "on schedule and on budget, with results expected by late June 2017".
The company said that pentosan polysulfate sodium had "the potential to be first in class as a dual treatment for both early and late stage hay fever in one nasal spray".
Paradigm chief executive officer Paul Rennie said the company was "very pleased to be on-track and on-budget with this trial for what has the potential to be a ground-breaking treatment for hay fever sufferers".
"The completion of the trial represents a major milestone for our company and we are looking forward to the read-out of the trial by the end of June," Mr Rennie said.
Paradigm was up three cents or 6.7 percent to 48 cents.

BARD1 LIFE SCIENCES

Bard1 says it has completed a clinical trial of its ovarian cancer on 348 samples of which 200 were from women with ovarian cancer and 148 were controls.

Bard1 said that the test had 87 percent specificity and 90 percent sensitivity, with an overall receiver operating characteristic area-under-the-curve for accuracy of 0.92.

The company said the test detected all subtypes and stages of ovarian cancer in the samples with the performance of the test between early-stage and late stage ovarian cancer not statistically different ($p > 0.5$).

Bard1 said that its ovarian cancer test was an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (Elisa) test that used a panel of peptides on a solid surface and when exposed to a blood sample, measured the binding of antibodies in the patient's blood to the peptides.

Bard1 chief executive officer Dr Leearne Hinch said that "with high levels of accuracy shown to all stages of ovarian cancer, our test may offer a substantial improvement over existing ovarian cancer blood tests using CA125 where both sensitivity and specificity are lower".

"Our test should greatly improve the accurate detection of cancer at all stages with few false positives," Dr Hinch said.

The company said that further studies were planned to show the use of the Bard1 ovarian cancer test for distinction of benign ovarian lesions and cancer.

Bard1 said that an evaluation of commercial instrument platforms would be undertaken to select the best platform for future clinical validation studies testing large prospective cohorts in a clinical laboratory.

Bard1 climbed 1.8 cents or 60 percent to 4.8 cents with 106.7 million shares traded.

ZELDA THERAPEUTICS

Zelda says it has expanded its medical cannabis program with trials for insomnia and eczema to begin in Chile in the second half of 2017 with results by the end of the year.

Zelda said that the combined global value of the insomnia and eczema markers wer about $US8 billion in 2016.

The company said that Chile had made progress to recognize the importance of medical cannabis research, allowing the production of medical cannabis since 2014.

Zelda said it had identified clinicians and sites in Chile where the trials would take place, with protocols being finalized for submission to human ethics committees for approval.

The company said that it would "leverage its relationship with Auscann Group through its Chilean joint-venture Dayacann and would work with Chilean non-profit patient advocate group Fundacion Daya.

Zelda said that Dayacann was the only licenced producer of medicinal cannabis in Chile and was expected to harvest its first crop by July 2017.

The company said the trials would form part of the registration protocols with Chile's Institute of Public Health to demonstrate efficacy before the medicinal cannabis products could be registered and marketed within Chile.

Zelda said that it expected to conclude the trials by the end of 2017 with data available shortly after then begin the product registration process to provide a pathway to potential revenue as early as 2018.

The company said that registration in Chile had the potential to open other South American markets where medical cannabis was permitted, including Brazil.

Zelda executive chairman Harry Karelis said the sleep and dermatitis markets were "significant opportunities".

Zelda was unchanged at 8.2 cents with 12.8 million shares traded.

BARD1 LIFE SCIENCES

Bard1 says the US Patent and Trademark Office has issued a patent protecting its technologies for lung and colorectal cancer.
Bard1 said the patent entitled 'Bard1 isoforms in lung and colorectal cancer and use thereof' would provide protection until Aug 17, 2031.
This company said that the patent family protected "the sequence of various Bard1 isoforms specific to lung and colorectal cancer, a method for detecting the presence of the specific Bard1 isoforms and a method for treating and/or preventing lung cancer and colorectal cancer".
Bard1 said that the patent was filed in the name of Université De Genève and Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève.
The company said it had licenced the commercial rights to the technology from the university and hospital.

CRESO PHARMA

Creso has requested a trading halt pending "an announcement in relation to a proposed capital raising".
Trading will resume on March 27, 2017, or on an earlier announcement.
Creso last traded at 82.5 cents.

AVITA MEDICAL

Peter Hall, Zeppelin Investments, Aubigny Investments and Hampshire Assets and Services says they have ceased their association with Hunter Hall International.
In a substantial shareholder notice, signed by Peter Hall, the four London-based entities associated with Mr Hall said they had ceased their association with the Sydney-based Hunter Hall International.
Earlier this month, Hunter Hall Investment Management said it had reduced its holding in Avita to 111,311,698 shares or 16.54 percent (BD: Mar 10, 2017).
A spokesperson for Hunter Hall told Biotech Daily that its holdings continued.
Avita was unchanged at 10 cents.