



Biotech Daily

Monday July 5, 2010

Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

- * **ASX, BIOTECH DOWN: VIRAX UP 16%; PRIMA DOWN 14%**
- * **HEALTHLINK'S OVPLEX OVARIAN CANCER TEST HITS HARLEY STREET**
- * **HEALTHLINK CONCERN OVER CRITICAL REPORT IN THE AGE**
- * **IMMURON SHORTFALL PLACEMENT RAISES \$746K**
- * **STIRLING CLAIMS UNNAMED INSTITUTE BACKS IMMUNOXEL FOR HIV**

MARKET REPORT

The Australian stock market slipped 0.4 percent on Monday July 5, 2010 with the S&P ASX 200 down 16.6 points to 4222.1 points.

Six of the Biotech Daily Top 40 stocks were up, 13 fell, five traded unchanged and 16 were untraded.

Virax was best, up 1.1 cents or 16.4 percent to 7.8 cents with 27,000 shares traded.

Acrux, Heartware and Resmed climbed more than three percent; with Bionomics and Circadian up more than one percent.

Prima led the falls, down 1.5 cents or 14.3 percent to nine cents with 17 million shares traded.

Alchemia, Biota and Nanosonics lost more than four percent; Cathrx, Chemgenex, Optiscan and Universal Biosensors were down more than three percent, Clinuvel and Viralytics shed more than two percent; with Pharmaxis down 1.45 percent.

HEALTHLINK

Healthlink says Spire Healthcare's London Fertility Clinic in Harley Street will offer its Ovplex ovarian cancer test through its outpatient service.

Healthlink said its UK Intus Healthcare was partnered to Spire Healthcare, the UK's second largest private hospital group, which would provide the pathology and outpatient services for Ovplex in 18 of their 37 British hospitals.

Healthlink fell 0.7 cents or 5.7 percent to 9.8 cents with 926,455 shares traded.

HEALTHLINK

Healthlink chairman Prof Greg Rice says an article in The Age failed to report an impending large scale trial of the company's Ovplex test for ovarian cancer.

In today's Age, reporter Mary-Anne Toy quoted "doctors, researchers and a leading women's cancer body ... [who] say there is no proof it will save lives".

The Age quoted Prof Rice saying he "concedes there is no evidence that Ovplex can save lives but argues that because it is more accurate than CA-125 it is a better diagnostic tool and worth \$200".

"He says there are 90,000 CA125 tests done each year in Australia. "We have a better test, why wouldn't you use it?" The Age reported Prof Rice saying.

"The one study that has been done with Ovplex has been done appropriately and the findings are scientifically sound. It's a better test than CA-125,' he said," The Age reported. The Age reported that the "one study done on Ovplex used 362 samples from women with ovarian cancer and healthy controls and was published by the Journal of Cancer Research Clinical Oncology this year. But some experts say large trials involving thousands of women are needed to determine whether Ovplex has a role in clinical practice."

But Prof Rice told Biotech Daily that he had told The Age that Healthlink had announced a larger scale trial of 1150 samples (BD: Jun 15, 2010), but this fact failed to appear in The Age article along with several other issues.

Prof Rice said Ovplex was offered as an alternative to the CA125 test, not as a screening test for ovarian cancer.

The Age also quoted the chief executive officer of the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre and Cancer Australia Dr Helen Zorbas saying "that no data on Ovplex have been reported from prospective controlled clinical trials and there is currently no evidence that Ovplex has any impact on ovarian cancer mortality."

Dr Zorbas was reported saying in The Age that "further studies were required to determine whether Ovplex and similar tests had a role in clinical practice".

The article also quoted gynaecological oncologist at the Royal Women's Hospital and the University of Melbourne Prof Michael Quinn saying "he refused to have his name on the Ovplex study published in January, even though he was involved".

Biotech Daily attempted to contact Prof Quinn to confirm his statements to The Age and was told he was mountain climbing and would not be contactable until July 12, 2010.

Melbourne Mercy Hospital's head of gynecological oncology Prof Peter Grant was quoted saying the single Ovplex study did not prove that the test improves a woman's chances of surviving ovarian cancer.

"I have seen quite a number of women who have come to me in the past 18 months with high Ovplex tests [results] who are worried out of their brain. In no case have I found an ovarian cancer," Prof Grant said.

Prof Grant told Biotech Daily that he had not counted the number of false positives from the Ovplex test but said it was a few and less than 10 patients.

IMMURON

Immuron says it has raised a further \$746,016 through the placement of 11,543,515 share plan shortfall shares at 6.5 cents a share.

Last month Immuron said its share plan raised \$691,387 through the issue of 10,636,702 shares at 6.5 cents a share.

The company said the total raised of \$1.437 million would be used primarily to accelerate the development of its hyper-immune technology in non-alcoholic steato-hepatitis and influenza.

Immuron said the non-alcoholic steato-hepatitis product was in phase II clinical trials and the influenza product was in late stage preclinical trials.

Immuron's chief executive officer Dr Grant Rawlin said the fundraising would allow the company to accelerate its clinical programs and would "further our global licencing efforts". Immuron was up half a cent or 6.85 percent to 7.8 cents.

STIRLING PRODUCTS

Stirling says preclinical trials at an unnamed US research institute support its over-the-counter cure-all Immunoxel for HIV.

The company said that "in vitro and in vivo laboratory studies commenced in 2009 ... at a major national US research institute have resulted in a positive determination of certain mechanisms of action of Immunoxel and opened up potentially new opportunities for its clinical use".

Stirling has previously said that Immunoxel was developed in Kiev in the Ukraine and that the Australian company was a distributor of the product.

Stirling said Immunoxel was "used extensively in Eastern Europe to help avoid and combat the common cold and flu and in a number of clinics as a natural immunomodulator in the treatment of tuberculosis and HIV".

The company has also claimed that has efficacy against the H1N1 strain of influenza among other indications.

Stirling said the US studies intended to determine Immunoxel's mechanism of action and secure "recognised Western science validation of the Immunoxel mechanism and effectiveness in treating TB and HIV particularly".

The company said that Immunoxel "did not show any sign of toxicity in the in vitro studies on the peripheral blood mononuclear cells from Rh-macaques [Rhesus macaque monkeys] in advanced stage of SIV-disease".

Stirling said Immunoxel increased the production of cytokine IL2 and proliferation marker K167 in response to exposure to a viral antigen, SIVenv peptides, in vitro in T-cells from chronically SIV-infected monkeys.

The company said Immunoxel amplified the in vitro vaccine-specific T-cell proliferation response in a monkey model of HIV vaccination.

Stirling was unchanged at 0.7 cents with 16.7 million shares traded.