

Calculus-backed biotech pioneer Scancell making ‘exciting’ progress on cancer vaccines

The leadership team of pioneering biotechnology company Scancell, which is developing new immunotherapy techniques to treat cancer, announced “exciting” progress when they addressed a seminar for investors and analysts.

Scancell, in which Calculus is the largest institutional investor, is developing lower toxicity vaccines designed to be used to help the body’s immune system fight hard to treat cancers.

The company has two technology platforms, ImmunoBody and Moditope, both of which are designed to produce vaccines that help the body’s powerful anti-cancer T-cells to identify and eliminate cancer cells.

Speaking at the Calculus-sponsored seminar at the Royal Society of Medicine in London on Friday 16th February, Scancell’s management team outlined the AIM-listed company’s latest progress, which includes:

- A partnership with Cancer Research UK (“CRUK”) in which CRUK will fund and run a clinical trial of Scancell’s ImmunoBody therapy, SCIB2, for the treatment of patients with solid tumours, including non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC).
- A research partnership with BioNTech, Europe’s largest private biotech company, with an initial focus on Scancell’s Moditope Modi-1 treatment and an eventual goal of developing new T-cell-based therapies.
- A team led by Scancell’s Chief Scientific Officer, Professor Lindy Durrant, being shortlisted for the Cancer Research UK Grand Challenge award, which provide grants for teams tackling the toughest questions in cancer research. The Modi-3 treatment generated from Scancell’s Moditope platform will be a central element of the team’s approach together with the involvement of Genentech and BioNTech.

Scancell’s Chief Executive Officer, Dr Cliff Holloway, said: “Taken in combination, these announcements represent a significant validation and endorsement of Scancell’s technology by renowned oncology partners.”

He added that there was huge interest in T-cell-based therapies and the company was now moving towards commercialisation of its treatments.

Professor Lindy Durrant, Scancell’s CSO, said the Modi-1 treatment from the Moditope platform had induced a potent anti-tumour response in pre-clinical studies with established melanoma. A single immunisation had resulted in a 100% response rate.

She said: “What’s really exciting about Moditope is that it’s a completely different way of looking at things. I’ve never seen anything as potent in 30 years.”

The first human trials of Modi-1 are due to begin in the first half of next year.

Scancell’s Chairman, Dr John Chiplin, said: “These are very exciting developments. Exciting in terms of the treatment of cancer and also in relation to the potential returns for shareholders.”

Evoking a famous quote from the early days of the then underappreciated potential of the internet, he said: “Immuno-oncology is probably underhyped. We are only really starting to make real progress in this field, there are still tremendous advances to be made and I’m absolutely delighted that Scancell is to the fore.”

John Glencross, CEO of Calculus Capital, said: “What we are seeing at Scancell are truly ground-breaking advances in science together with developing commercial traction for their treatments. It’s a very, very exciting story.”