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SQZ Biotech, Roche to develop APC for Immune-Oncology

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SQZ Biotechnologies, a cell therapy company developing novel treatments for multiple therapeutic areas, has announced the expansion of its collaboration with Roche in cellular therapy. The expanded partnership furthers the synergistic combination of SQZ's innovation and expertise in cell therapy with Roche's cancer immunotherapy expertise. Under the terms, SQZ and Roche will jointly develop and commercialize certain products based on antigen presenting cells (APCs) created by the SQZ platform for the treatment of oncology indications.

Under the collaboration, SQZ may receive up to $125 million in upfront payment and near-term milestones. SQZ could earn up to $250 million in clinical, regulatory and sales milestones per product that emerges from the collaboration. In addition, SQZ may receive development milestone payments of over $1 billion. Within the collaboration, SQZ and Roche could share commercial rights for certain approved products.

SQZ APCs leverage native immune functions to spark target-specific killer (CD8) T cell responses in vivo. Through effective presentation of antigens on MHC-I, SQZ APCs can directly stimulate CD8 T cell activity and potentially drive powerful anti-tumor effects that address antigens inaccessible by other adoptive cell-based cancer immune therapy strategies. In addition to their broad targeting potential, the SQZ APC engineering and manufacturing process requires no cellular expansion or genetic modification by viruses or editing agents, thereby dramatically improving the anticipated safety profile, cutting production time, and cost.