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Boehringer Ingelheim expanding immuno-oncology portfolio

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Acquires Northern Biologicsâ?? Preclinical Cancer Antibody Pipeline



German firm Boehringer Ingelheim has announced the acquisition of Canada based Northern Biologics Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Northern LP. By acquiring this entity, which focuses on therapeutic antibodies targeting the tumor microenvironment, Boehringer Ingelheim is now positioned at the forefront of the stromal biology space - an emerging area in cancer immunology.

The seller will retain the Northern Biologics name and its subsidiaries will continue to drive certain preclinical efforts on one of the programs, while Boehringer Ingelheim will be responsible for clinical, regulatory and commercial development of the acquired programs.

The total transaction includes an upfront payment, milestones and other consideration payments.

The first program, now in late preclinical development, is an antibody inhibitor of Periostin, a secreted matricellular protein overexpressed in the immunosuppressive stroma microenvironment of many solid tumor types. Targeting these stromal cells can help turn previously ‘cold’ tumors – non-reactive, immunologically inactive tumors – to ‘hot’ tumors – those that are susceptible or accessible to host immune system attack. The antibody program targeting Periostin has emerged as a promising therapy to overcome stromal mechanisms of immune exclusion and suppression.

The second program targets a key regulator of myeloid cells that is important for enhancing anti-tumor T-cell function. Targeting myeloid cells is a focus area of research and clinical development for Boehringer Ingelheim and the acquired program offers combination opportunities across Boehringer Ingelheim’s portfolio.

“This acquisition provides Boehringer Ingelheim with two complementary assets to our existing cancer immunology portfolio and supports our strategy to target ‘cold’ tumors with synergistic combination approaches,” said Jonathon Sedgwick, Ph.D., Senior Vice President and Global Head, Cancer Immunology & Immune Modulation Research, Boehringer Ingelheim. “Driving innovation in tumor stroma and myeloid cell biology is yet another example of how we are ‘Taking Cancer On’ by exploring first-in-class approaches to provide the best treatment options for cancer patients.”

“We are grateful for this relationship with Boehringer Ingelheim, which accelerates these assets into the clinic,” said Philip Vickers, Ph.D., President and CEO of Northern Biologics. “I am proud of our team, which discovered and advanced these novel compounds in the field of tumor stroma and myeloid cell biology.”

Northern Biologics retains rights to its lead asset, MSC-1, an anti-LIF 1 antibody that recently successfully completed Phase 1 clinical trials.

This acquisition positions Boehringer Ingelheim as a leader in the field of stromal targeting biology and, along with a series of strategic acquisitions and collaborations over the past two years, further strengthens the company’s broad and diverse oncology pipeline. By combining its world-class, in-house research and development with that of highly innovative biotechnology companies, Boehringer Ingelheim is developing innovative cancer immunology therapies and accelerating the delivery of the next generation of cancer treatments.