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Merck, Pfizer to co-market potential cancer drug

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Merck and Pfizer have decided to co-promote Pfizer's anaplastic lymphoma kinase (ALK) inhibitor Xalkori (crizotinib), ALK inhibitor approved in the United States, Japan and the European Union (EU) and is supported by two positive global randomized trials in the first and second line ALK-positive advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) treatment settings.

The alliance is to establish a combined oncology sales organization in key markets in advance of the potential launch of avelumab-based treatment regimens in the future.

Under the agreement, Xalkori will be co-promoted in two waves, the first of which will begin in the second and third quarters of 2015 in the United States, Canada, Japan and five European Union countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom). In the United States and Canada, XALKORI will be co-promoted by EMD Serono, the US and Canadian biopharmaceutical businesses of Merck. The second wave will begin in 2016 and includes China and Turkey.

In 2015, Merck will receive a reimbursement associated with its promotion of Xalkori, followed by an 80 percent (Pfizer), 20 percent (Merck) profit sharing on the product starting in 2016. The co-promotion term will last through December 31, 2020 for the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom and from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2021 in China and Turkey. Pfizer will report the sales of Xalkori in countries where it is co-promoted with Merck.

"We are proud and excited to share the legacy of Xalkori, a medicine that changed the treatment paradigm for patients with ALK-positive metastatic NSCLC, with Merck," said Ms Liz Barrett, president and general manager, Pfizer Oncology. "Through our co-promotion of Xalkori, we will establish a best-in-class global sales organization that will be exceptionally prepared for the potential launches of our future oncology medicines."

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"As we progress our robust program to co-develop and co-commercialize avelumab, the co-promotion agreement is an exciting milestone for the alliance between Merck and Pfizer, allowing us to establish our combined oncology sales organization in key markets for the program," said Dr Andrew Schiermeier, general manager for the Merck-Pfizer Alliance and head of global oncology, adding, "For Merck, this agreement is particularly important as it accelerates the establishment of our United States and Canada oncology sales organization ahead of our potential avelumab launches and positions us for future success in this market."

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