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Immuno-oncology collaboration between F-Star and Merck KGaA

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The addition of assets from F-star's bispecific antibody platform enrich and complement Merck KGaA's existing in-house technologies investigating molecules that offer the potential advantage of taking a dual approach to tackling cancer.



Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company which operates its biopharmaceutical business as EMD Serono in the US and Canada, has announced a new strategic collaboration with biopharmaceutical company F-star, Cambridge, UK, for the development and commercialization of five bispecific immuno-oncology antibodies. These bispecific antibodies target specific pathways to augment the anti-tumor immune response.

Beyond these five bispecific antibodies, Merck KGaA will have further rights to replace, as well as to add to these antibodies using F-star's bispecific antibody platform. This collaboration will further strengthen Merck KGaA’s immuno-oncology pipeline and underscores the commitment to discovering and developing breakthrough cancer therapies that make a meaningful difference to patients' lives.

Under the agreement and upon delivery of pre-defined data packages, Merck KGaA has the option to acquire five of F-star's bispecific programs. Merck KGaA will pay up to €115 million in upfront, R&D funding and milestone payments in the first 2 years, and may make further payments upon exercising its option and based on milestones.

Merck KGaA already has a bifunctional antibody in its pipeline, M7824. Currently in Phase I, M7824 is believed to combine two mechanisms in one molecule to fight cancer. The addition of assets from F-star's bispecific antibody platform enrich and complement Merck KGaA's existing in-house technologies investigating molecules that offer the potential advantage of taking a dual approach to tackling cancer.