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Media Contact

PRESS RELEASE

Hope for Hepatitis B patients

New research project to cure hepatitis B patients under the European Horizon 2020 programme

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On 1st January 2020, a new research project in hepatitis B has started under the European Horizon 2020 programme. The main objective of the TherVacB project is to develop a therapeutic vaccine to cure hepatitis B patients. The research is conducted by an international consortium and led by Helmholtz Zentrum München. The Division of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine at the LMU University Hospital Munich will assume a key role in this project by acting as the sponsor for an upcoming Phase Ib/IIa clinical trial.

More than three percent of the world's population (about 260 million humans) are chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV). Worldwide 880,000 humans die each year from the sequelae: liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma. Currently, there is no cure. The therapeutic vaccine TherVacB aims to cure patients with chronic hepatitis B. A consortium of leading virologists, immunologists and specialized physicians will use a newly designed vaccine as an immunotherapy in a two-year clinical trial starting in 2021. With three vaccine shots, one every four weeks, the vaccine induces neutralizing antibodies and T-cell responses. At first, two protein antigens are injected, followed by an MVA ("modified vaccinia virus Ankara") vector. This vector is designed to express hepatitis B viruses found worldwide. Since Africa suffers from a high infection rate and particular HBV viruses can be found there, part of the clinical trial will be conducted in Tanzania. This shall also help building local capacities for diagnosing and treating hepatitis B.

Project coordinator Prof. Ulrike Protzer on the benefits of the project: "I am highly pleased that for the clinical trials of TherVacB we are able to cooperate with a consortium of Europe's leading virologists, immunologists and hepatologist, guided by Helmholtz

Zentrum München. This will be of great benefit for the patients chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus."

Prof. Michael Hoelscher, Director of the Division of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine at the LMU University Hospital Munich, believes in the potential of the research project: "TherVacB will significantly strengthen international clinical trial collaboration focused on innovative concepts to fight chronic Hepatitis B. We are very pleased to be involved in this important activity as the study sponsor and to contribute to the network."

Dr. Arne Kroidl, project leader at the LMU University Hospital Munich, emphasizes: „The involvement of an African partner site in the TherVacB activity is of great importance, as we will not only scale out novel therapeutic concepts against Hepatitis B in regions where populations are most affected, but also increase research capacities and extend laboratory methodologies that will enable broader African network collaboration. “

TherVacB is supported by H2020 with 10.426.000 million Euros. The project runs over five years and will end on 31 December, 2024.

The parties involved

The TherVacB project is coordinated by Helmholtz Zentrum München and unites public research organisations from across Europe: Klinikum Rechts der Isar der Technischen Universität München, Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf, Medizinische Hochschule Hannover, Helmholtz-Zentrum für Infektionsforschung GmbH, LMU University Hospital Munich, Universität Leipzig, Technische Universität München (Germany); National Institute for Medical Research (Tanzania); Fundacio Clinic per a la Recerca Biomedica (Spain); Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Parma (Italy); University College London, Barts and the London NHS Trust, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (United Kingdom), supported by Biotechnology related enterprise members CTC North GmbH & Co. KG (Germany) and ARTTIC (France).

About Horizon 2020 Programme

Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly 80 billion Euros of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020). It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market. The project is funded in a specific call about innovative treatments and technologies such as gene or cell therapies. With this specific call the European Union aims to improve the development of advanced methods and devices for targeted and controlled delivery, and to bring these innovative treatments to the patient.

About the Division of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine, LMU University Hospital Munich

The Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) Munich is one of Germany's largest universities and is participating in this project with the LMU University Hospital's Division of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine. The mission of this department is to improve prevention and treatment of infectious and tropical diseases. It aims at achieving this goal through research, translation of evidence into improved services and policies, and transfer of knowledge. Besides its activities in travel medicine and in providing outpatient and clinical consultant services, the Division of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine houses the German Center for Infection Research (DZIF) international Clinical Trials Unit (iCTU), led by Prof. M. Hoelscher. The iCTU is experienced and equipped to design, organize and conduct clinical trials on new treatments, diagnostics and interventions with focus on improvement of health in low- and middle-income countries. Established through many previous and current collaborations, close research partnerships are in place with various Sub-Saharan countries, e.g. Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, The Gambia, and Uganda.

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LMU University Hospital Munich

With its two locations in Munich, the Grosshadern campus and the campus in the city center, the LMU University Hospital is one of the largest university hospitals in Germany and Europe. Every year, around 500,000 patients trust the competence, care and commitment of our employees in 29 specialized clinics, twelve institutes and seven departments as well as the 50 interdisciplinary centers.

Outstanding facilities of the LMU Clinic include the oncological center CCC M, Bavaria's largest transplant center TxM, the German Vertigo and Balance Center, the Institute for Tropical Medicine and the Center for International Health (CIH). In addition, the LMU University Hospital is represented in all German centers of health research and in the DIFUTURE consortium as part of the medical informatics initiative of the Federal Ministry of Medical Research.

Please visit www.lmu-klinikum.de for more information.

