



Celentyx -Teaching Old Drugs New Tricks (图)

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06 Mar 07 Gisela Stuart (MP for Edgbaston) is set to formally open Celentyx Ltd, a new spin-out company from the University of Birmingham. Celentyx Ltd is a pharmaceutical company that develops treatments for common diseases by finding new uses for existing drugs.

The company uses its proprietary technological processes to investigate whether drugs that are already licensed to treat one condition, and are hence considered safe, could be put to an alternative therapeutic use for other medical conditions.

Celentyx Ltd, which is the brainchild of Dr Nicholas Barnes and Professor John Gordon from the University's Medical School, will be launched at the Birmingham Research Park on Friday March 2nd.

The company uses a novel technology developed by the founders, called NCIP (Novel Clinical Identification Profiling), to assess the suitability of existing drugs in the treatment of new illnesses. The process uses only human tissues and cells to identify potential drugs, which adds to the clinical relevance of the results.

Previous research from the Birmingham team has already shown the potential of medicines such as Prozac and drugs used to treat Parkinson's disease as possible therapies for certain types of lymphoma and leukaemia.

Dr Nicholas Barnes explains: "Finding new uses for drugs with a proven clinical safety record is an exceptionally efficient way to work, because these compounds have already been through rigorous safety testing, so it saves considerable money in research and development terms.

In addition, this approach bypasses a major hurdle to successful drug development as we know that the drugs will not fail due to safety problems. Celentyx's drug development process has already generated drug candidates ready to be assessed in phase II patient trials and our drug development pipeline, fuelled by NCIP, is likely to yield more candidate drugs over the next couple of years. "

As well as conducting original research, Celentyx will also make their NCIP methodologies available to other pharmaceutical companies, who are looking to examine the effect potential new drugs have on the human immune system.

Professor John Gordon adds: "Our earlier research has shown that several medicines, which were previously thought to have effects specifically in the brain also affect our immune systems. We hope our new technologies will allow collaborative projects with other pharmaceutical companies to investigate the effects of their developmental drugs on cells in the immune system.

The third member of the board and non-executive Director is Dr Alan Boyd. He is both an alumnus of the University and is an extremely successful Research and Development Director in the pharmaceutical industry, with a track record of delivering scientific ideas into marketed healthcare products.

Jonathan Watkins from Birmingham Research and Development Limited, who assisted in turning the idea into a fully fledged company commented: "We were delighted to be able to assist Nick and John in realising the commercial potential of their ideas. In the 21 years since BRDL was founded there has been an increasing desire amongst academics to develop the commercial side of their work, and from our perspective it is always tremendously satisfying to see something that begins life as a scientific concept reach this stage. "

Celentyx Ltd has received a number of business grants, including a DTI Grant for Research & Development (administered by Advantage West Midlands). The company is currently negotiating further investment to allow expansion of operations.

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