

Media Coverage

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Quest for cancer solutions heads to biotech market

A cell-based therapy to combat infections in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy is one of many University of Queensland (UQ) research innovations UniQuest will be promoting at the annual Ausbiotech Conference next week, the premier biotechnology meeting for the Asia Pacific region.

On the quest for better outcomes for cancer patients, UQ researchers at the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN) have developed TheraPhil: an “off the shelf” product which has the potential to prevent neutropenia.

Neutropenia is a high-risk blood disorder that occurs when chemotherapy destroys the white blood cells needed to defend the body from bacterial and fungal infections.

Following high-dose chemotherapy, neutropenia renders cancer patients susceptible to infections, which can result in increased hospitalisations and sometimes death.

With TheraPhil ready for Phase 1 clinical trials, finding a commercial partner has become a priority for UniQuest, UQ's main commercialisation company.

“We have been working closely with the TheraPhil research team to create a commercially viable prospect for potential investors with the financial resources to take this product further,” UniQuest Managing Director David Henderson said.

“TheraPhil is based on valuable intellectual property which could offer a range of financial, clinical and economic returns to the University, Australia's biotech industry and the health services sector.

“We are confident there's an investment or licensing partner on the horizon who wants to help get this product into hospitals for the benefit of patients in critical need, and we'll be letting the industry know more about it at Ausbiotech.”

Other UniQuest projects in focus at Ausbiotech this year include technologies that can make vaccines more effective, discoveries that could lead to the prevention and treatment of Type 1 Diabetes, and a potential candidate for a prostate cancer vaccine.

Visitors to UniQuest's trade display (booth 177) will learn about a range of market-ready projects, from a clinically validated telehealth system for Allied Health Professionals to a program empowering health professionals with proven strategies to support patients' compliance with their medication.

The diversity of biotech breakthroughs also includes an innovation that limits heat stress and promotes rapid recovery for people working in dangerously hot conditions, and several technologies related to medical testing devices.

These opportunities to collaborate on ground-breaking biotech developments are based on research from The University of Queensland's science faculties and institutes, as well as UniQuest's research commercialisation partners: University of Wollongong, Mater Medical Research Institute, James Cook University, University of Technology Sydney, University of Tasmania, and two ARC Centres of Excellence (for integrative legume research and functional nanomaterials).

At the Ausbiotech Conference, which attracts some 1500 delegates from 20 countries each year,

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UniQuest representatives will network with potential investors, licensees and research partners to advance its portfolio of technologies and promote the capabilities of UniQuest-associated research teams.

UniQuest has helped to launch several Australian life sciences innovations onto the global market since 1984:

- UniQuest was involved with the early commercialisation of the HPV technology discovered by Dr Ian Frazer and his late research partner Dr Jian Zhou, which has contributed to the development of a vaccine for cervical cancer. More than 55 million doses of Gardasil have been distributed worldwide since its 2006 launch.
- UniQuest bio-pharmaceutical start-up QRxPharma Limited listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) in May 2007 and made history as Australia's biggest biotechnology float. This month QRxPharma announced a Placement which raised A\$14 million and which was significantly oversubscribed.
- Another UniQuest start-up, ImpediMed Ltd, closed oversubscribed when it listed on the ASX and as a publicly-listed company in September 2007. It recently became the first company to offer FDA, CE and TGA cleared L-Dex devices for simple point of care, standardised and objective metrics to aid in the clinical assessment of lymphoedema.
- Spinifex Pharmaceuticals Pty Limited attracted \$10.5M this year in an expanded "Tranche 2" Series B capital raising for developing its neuropathic pain therapies. UniQuest established Spinifex in 2005 with a pre-seed investment from Uniseed.

Ausbiotech 2010 will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from 19-22 October.

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