Alma Bio Therapeutics and Delphi Genetics extend strategic alliance on plasmid DNA drugs

Partnership will advance development of drugs aimed at treating underlying cause of uncontrolled inflammation in autoimmune diseases

Lyon, France, and Charleroi, Belgium, June 26, 2017 – Alma Bio Therapeutics SAS (Alma) and Delphi Genetics SA announce today that they are taking their strategic alliance to develop plasmid DNA drugs to the next level. Both companies view the partnership between Alma, a pioneer of novel curative therapies to treat autoimmune diseases, and Delphi Genetics, a leading developer of unique technologies for bioproduction of plasmid DNA, recombinant proteins and antibodies, a natural fit.

Alma focuses on developing therapies to cure autoimmune diseases. It is tackling Crohn's disease, one of the two major types of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), as its first clinical application. Currently prescribed IBD treatments aim to manage disease symptoms; they suppress inflammation and extend intervals between flare-ups, improving the patients' quality of life. Alma's treatments go beyond the symptoms, treating the underlying cause of autoimmune disease without suppressing the function of the immune system.

Alma and Delphi Genetics have been collaborating since 2014 on generating a plasmid DNA drug for Alma's preclinical efficacy studies. Under the terms of this alliance, Delphi Genetics will produce the plasmid DNA drugs needed to advance Alma's pipeline and complete the regulatory studies necessary to submit an IND (Investigational New Drug).

"Delphi Genetics is an ideal partner. It has scientific excellence, high-quality bio-production services and an established track record with big pharma," said Binah Baum, CEO of Alma. "We are delighted with the strong vote of confidence its management has given our game-changing therapeutic approach to treating autoimmune diseases. With their expertise, we believe our program to demonstrate safety and efficacy of our therapies in patients should move rapidly."

Alma's pipeline consists of a product family of plasmids DNA encoding Heat Shock Proteins. HSPs are body molecules that serve as self-antigens to regulatory T-cells; they have been shown to possess pro-resolution activity. Pro-resolution therapies are sought-after in autoimmune disease treatments due to their ability to restore the delicate balance between healthy cells (regulatory T-cells) and the rogue cells (pro-inflammatory effector T-cells) the immune system is designed to eliminate. Activating the immune system to better regulate itself would mark a significant improvement over the way autoimmune diseases are currently treated.

Alma's first target is Crohn's disease, a chronic debilitating autoimmune disease of the gastrointestinal tract and one of the two subtypes of IBD. IBD affects an estimated 3.5 million people in the US and Europe. Its prevalence is rising on every continent (Nature Reviews: the global burden of IBD: from 2015 – 2025). A second target is rheumatoid arthritis, affecting an estimated 1% of all Caucasians (totaling roughly 7 million people across North America, North Africa and Europe).

This partnership places Alma in a stronger position to attract longer-term investment with the aim of preparing entry into a phase 1 clinical trial for Crohn's disease in H2 2018. It gains access to Delphi Genetics' bioproduction manufacturing capabilities, including Staby®, its antibiotic-free plasmid DNA production technology.

"Having received validation of our technologies by several big pharmaceutical companies for protein production, this partnership with Alma will be an additional milestone for Delphi Genetics. It advances our Staby® technologies in clinical phases to produce plasmid DNA in GMP grade according to regulatory guidelines," said Cédric Szpirer, executive and scientific director of Delphi Genetics. "We are one of a very few manufacturers able to produce plasmid DNA and recombinant proteins without antibiotics and antibiotic resistance genes. We achieve this at higher yields than classic bio-production."

"Our partnership with Alma Bio Therapeutics represents an important next step in Delphi Genetics' development and strategic direction," said Marc Dechamps, managing director of Delphi Genetics. "It allows us to accelerate our development as a key player in Europe for the bio-production of plasmid DNA for human use. It also strengthens the company's dimension as a credible partner for companies involved in developing gene therapies and DNA vaccines."

About Alma Bio Therapeutics
Alma Bio Therapeutics is pioneering a curative approach to treat autoimmune diseases, in particular Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis. It develops drugs based on the way the immune system distinguishes between healthy cells and those 'other' cells it is designed to eliminate. The company's technology platform, aimed at correcting the underlying cause of autoimmune disease, leverages original research discoveries made by co-founder Irun Cohen, Prof. Emeritus at the Department of Immunology at the Weizmann Institute of Science (Rehovot, Israel). It holds seven patents.
Founded in late 2013, Alma is based in Lyon, a leading center for immunology and infectious diseases and is a member of the LyonBiopole competitiveness cluster.
www.alma-bio.com

About Delphi Genetics
Founded in 2001, Delphi Genetics develops innovative technologies and provides services for pDNA and protein productions (including antibodies) by using its unique expertise in the field of stabilisation systems. Delphi Genetics' patented 'antibiotic-free' Staby® technology increases the yield of recombinant protein or pDNA production in E. coli compared to the traditional approach (antibiotics). The technology is already licensed to several companies active in the food or pharmaceutical industry including Sanofi-Pasteur, GSK and Merck-MSD. Delphi Genetics provides custom services in genetic engineering in E. coli and mammalian cells (CHO, etc.), protein and DNA productions, and antibody development. Located in Charleroi (Gosselies) Belgium, Delphi Genetics seeks collaborative projects at all stages of development from R&D to clinical phase.
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