

Evolution Briefing:

Avacta Group announce new CDO

Avacta Group plc, the developer of Affimer® biotherapeutics and reagents, has announced the appointment of Neil Bell as Chief Development Officer. Neil will be responsible for late stage pre-clinical and early clinical development of Avacta's pipeline of preLCISION pro-drugs and Affimer immunotherapies.



Neil has over 30 years of valuable experience in the drug development industry. The early part of his career was spent in clinical development at Eisai and Pfizer before becoming Therapeutic Area Head at Ipsen. In each of these roles he led numerous Phase I to III clinical studies, gaining significant experience across all aspects of drug development: strategy, pre-clinical development, manufacturing, regulation and clinical study design and implementation.

the treatment for multiple sclerosis globally, as well as successfully introducing Azilect to global markets.



Neil Bell

Following this period at Teva, Neil joined Daichi-Sankyo as Head of Clinical Operations where he led the clinical operations team through early and late stage development activities

across the cardiovascular, pain and oncology areas. As well as this, he was responsible for building an effective drug development organisation in Europe, serving the global clinical programmes and leading to the successful global approval of Edoxaban.

Most recently, Neil held the role of Senior Vice President, Head of Global Clinical Operations at Autolus; a UK cell and gene therapy company backed by Syncona, which listed in the US in 2018 - a process in which Neil played a key role. At Autolus, Neil was responsible for building a functional global clinical operations team delivering Phase I/II clinical studies across the UK, Europe and US for acute lymphoblastic leukemia, multiple myeloma, B-cell lymphoma, and T-cell lymphoma. As well as this, he implemented the first commercially sponsored CAR-T study in the UK.



In his role as Head of Global Clinical Operations for Teva Pharmaceuticals, Neil led an international team responsible for the delivery of clinical programmes in neurology, autoimmune and oncology therapeutic areas. During this period, he contributed to the development of Copaxone achieving leadership in

Avacta Group Strategy

Avacta is a UK biotechnology company that is developing biotherapeutics and reagents based on its proprietary Affimer technology – an engineered alternative to antibodies.

Avacta Group plc came to the AIM market in 2006 to provide instrumentation, consumables and reagents for life science researchers. Since acquiring the Affimer technology, an engineered alternative to antibodies, in 2012, the Group has focused its investment and resources on this platform which it is commercialising through Avacta Life Sciences.

Affimer technology has a number of technical and commercial advantages over antibodies and can be used to develop therapeutics and reagents for diagnostics and research.

Initially the Group focused on the reagents opportunity for Affimer technology because of the nearer term revenues in this market. It remains a high priority for the Group to continue to build this revenue stream with the objective of creating a profitable Affimer diagnostics business unit as quickly as possible.

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Following the establishment of a partnership with Moderna Therapeutics Inc., Avacta Group raised capital to initiate their own in-house Affimer therapeutic programmes, focused on immuno-oncology, with the potential to deliver significant value to shareholders.

It is well known that the combination of chemotherapy and immunotherapy can deliver a better outcome for cancer patients than immunotherapy alone. In 2018, Avacta exclusively licensed the preLCISION technology, developed at Tufts University, which can be used to target chemotherapy towards the tumour, reducing the serious side effects of these effective cancer drugs.

The Group is now in a unique position with its two proprietary platforms to develop clinically differentiated cancer therapies which the Directors believe should generate significant commercial interest and value for shareholders.

Avacta are now at a stage to transition the business to a clinical stage biotech with multiple clinical programmes in the UK, Europe and the US.

Avacta is developing novel cancer immunotherapies, combining its two proprietary platforms: Affimer® biotherapeutics and preLCISION™ tumour targeted chemotherapy. With this approach, the company aims to address and rectify the lack of durable responses to current cancer immunotherapies, as well as current high, off-target toxicity experienced by most patients.

Avacta expects to enter the clinic with its lead preLCISION™ programme, a tumour activated form of doxorubicin, in the middle of 2020. The lead Affimer® programme, a PD-L1 Affimer® antagonist, will form the basis of future bispecifics, combinations with preLCISION™ chemotherapies and novel tumour microenvironment activated drug conjugates (TMAC®).

Avacta has established drug development partnerships with companies in the Pharma and Biotech industries, including a research collaboration with ModernaTx, Inc., a development and commercialisation deal with LG Chem (worth up to \$310m) and a collaboration with ADC Therapeutics to develop novel Affimer® drug conjugates. The Company is actively seeking to license its proprietary platforms in a range of therapeutic areas.

Dr Alastair Smith, Chief Executive of Avacta Group commented:

"I am absolutely delighted that Neil is joining Avacta as Chief Development Officer to build and lead the development team to take a pipeline of innovative cancer therapies into the clinic over the next few years; therapies that have the potential to significantly enhance cancer patients' lives.

Not only does Neil have tremendous drug development and operational experience, but he also brings significant strategic insight and will be a key member of the senior leadership team driving the Group's drug development and corporate strategy for the therapeutic business.

I am very much looking forward to working with Neil as we continue to transition the business to a clinical stage biotech with multiple clinical programmes in the UK, Europe and the US, building upon the world-class proprietary platforms and assets that we have developed in-house and with partners over the past few years."

Neil Bell, Chief Development Officer of Avacta Life Sciences commented:

"I am delighted to join the therapeutics team at Avacta Life Sciences at such an exciting time in its growth trajectory and where I believe the Company has significant opportunity to build a successful and agile clinical stage biopharmaceutical organisation with the capability to maximise its early development oncology assets for the ultimate benefit of patients. I very much look forward to working closely with Alastair and the therapeutics senior leadership team to establish a leading position for Avacta Life Sciences as a focused immunotherapy oncology company."

Source:- Avacta Group



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