

A*Star, Cytos begin 1st flu vaccine trial in Singapore

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Singapore: Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star) and Switzerland's Cytos Biotechnology have conducted the first phase I clinical trial on a healthy volunteer with their H1N1 influenza vaccine candidate.

The vaccine is based on Cytos' proprietary bacteriophage Qbeta virus-like particle (VLP) technology. In this first phase I clinical trial, the safety and immunogenicity of this novel vaccine candidate and its potential to protect against H1N1 influenza infection will be evaluated.

Under the agreement, Cytos retains the worldwide right to develop and commercialize the vaccine candidate globally, while A*Star subsidiaries will have the right to develop and commercialize the vaccine for Singapore and other ASEAN countries and can earn royalties on worldwide net sales. A*STAR's Experimental Therapeutics Centre (ETC) was the primary driver of the multi-institutional effort culminating in the start of the clinical development program, which involves partners like A*STAR's Singapore Immunology Network (SiGN), DSO National Laboratories and Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School. The phase I clinical trial is being conducted at the SingHealth Investigational Medicine Unit and the Changi General Hospital Trials and Research unit in Singapore.

Mr Lim Chuan Poh, chairman, A*Star and co-chair, Biomedical Sciences Executive Committee in Singapore, said that, "This is the first time Singapore is attempting to make its own flu vaccine. In the wake of the recent H7N9 bird flu outbreak, it is timely that A*Star is bringing Singapore's first H1N1 flu vaccine into phase I clinical trial. This different approach of making flu vaccines will better respond to the needs of a flu outbreak. I am pleased that the collaboration with Cytos is making a meaningful contribution to Singapore's pandemic readiness, a critical aspect of our national security. The success of this potential vaccine will be of significant impact not only to the region but also the world."

Dr Christian Itin, chairman and CEO, Cytos, commented that, "We are very pleased with the fruitful collaboration which has led to the clinical start of this novel influenza vaccine. This is an important milestone for the program and the first clinical program using Cytos' B-cell vaccine platform for a prophylactic vaccine against an infectious disease."