

Ace Biosciences

Ace Biosciences in-licences phase I enterotoxigenic E Coli (ETEC) vaccine from Cambridge Biostability Ltd- Deal involves initial payment, milestone and royalties.

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ACE BioSciences A/S, the infectious diseases company and Cambridge BioStability Ltd (CBL), the British biotechnology company have entered a strategic deal whereby ACE BioSciences in-licenses CBL's 'HolaVax', (to be called ACE537) an oral Phase I Enterotoxigenic E Coli (ETEC) vaccine which has the potential to be the first to market in the US and EU and which combats the single biggest cause of travelers diarrhoea.

Under the terms of the agreement, CBL receives an initial up-front payment and rights to milestone and royalty payments dependent on the successful completion of clinical trials and undisclosed sales targets respectively.

The vaccine, which comprises three different strains of attenuated Enterotoxigenic E coli bacteria, is scheduled to complete proof of concept studies in 2009, with potentially the first market launch anticipated in 2013. It is differentiated from other, competitive ETEC vaccines in development because it has a dual preventative action: it combats bacterial adherence to and colonisation of the small intestine and neutralizes the activity of the LT toxin, a key cause of diarrhoea. Its oral delivery formulation is another differentiating factor.

ETEC is the single largest bacterial cause of travellers' diarrhoea (TD) around the world, followed by Campylobacter, Salmonella and Shigella. ACE BioSciences is already developing a vaccine to address Campylobacter infection, ACE393, and this is in Phase II clinical trials. Market launch is scheduled for 2010 when ACE393 would be the first commercially available vaccine for TD.

Ms Ingelise Saunders, ACE BioSciences' CEO commented "ACE537 is a perfect strategic fit for ACE BioSciences, since it complements our Campylobacter vaccine and would follow it closely to market. Its dual action sets it apart from competitive programmes and should enable it to provide greater disease protection. In the first instance we intend to develop it as a stand-alone vaccine, but in the longer term there is potential to develop an oral combination vaccine to address ETEC and Campylobacter. We believe this would be of tremendous appeal to travellers, since it would protect recipients from the two greatest causes of travellers' diarrhoea."

ACE BioSciences estimates that by 2010, around 58 million travellers will visit areas where ETEC is endemic, with 3.9 – 9.8 million of these travellers likely to experience TD caused by ETEC. The global market for an ETEC vaccine is estimated to be worth €550 million per year. At present there is no vaccine that is widely approved for specific use against ETEC.