

Inovio Roche to continue partnership on INO-1800

Inovio Pharma {NASDAQ: INO} ends collaboration with Roche re ONO-5150, but confirms ongoing partnership re INO01800 Hepatitis B virus.

President and CEO Joseph Kim confirmed the ongoing partnership for INO-1800 "continues to thrive" on the ..

Inovio Pharmaceuticals {NASDAQ: INO}, a company dedicated to utilizing immunotherapies to fight cancer and other infectious disease, announced today that it has ended its collaboration with Roche (RHHBY) to develop INO-5150, a DNA immunotherapy targeting prostate cancer. The collaboration was signed in 2013, and had contained a licensing agreement.

Despite this news, Roche and Inovio will work together to continue to develop INO-1800, an immunotherapy geared toward the hepatitis B virus. The partnership will advance the drug toward a Phase 1 study in 2015.

"The Inovio/Roche partnership will continue to thrive focusing on the development of INO-1800 for the treatment of hepatitis B," said J. Joseph Kim, Inovio's president and CEO. "In addition to recently demonstrating clinical efficacy and the ability to induce potent antigen specific CD8+ T cell responses in our VGX-3100 phase II study, Inovio will be moving a broad portfolio of immuno-oncology products through development, including INO-3112 (head/neck and cervical cancers), INO-1400 (breast, lung and pancreatic cancers) and INO-5150 (prostate cancer). We believe that these products along with pre-phase III VGX-3100 will further our growth and represent opportunities for additional value-adding partnerships."

Inovio plans to independently developed INO-5150 and push it

into a Phase I clinical trial in the first half of 2015. All of Roche's rights to INO-5150, including the right to license the product to other companies, will be returned to Inovio.

INO-5150 works by targeting a prostate-specific membrane antigen and prostate-specific antigen. In a study that utilised monkeys, the vaccination showed that it could generate strong, robust T-cell immune responses. Inovio's SynCon DNA vaccine for prostate cancer was designed with PSA and PSMA synthetic consensus immunogens.

The goal of Inovio's approach is to help the body's immune system recognize cancer cells as "foreign" and encourage it to fight them off.

Inovio has also been working on INO-1800 for the treatment of hepatitis B. This vaccine has also been shown to generate strong T-cell and antibody responses that lead to the elimination of targeted liver cells in mice.