

Noxopharm provides interim data from NOXCOVID Veyonda trial

April 22, 2021

Noxopharm (ASX:NOX) has provided interim data from its NOXCOVID trial that is assessing the company's Veyonda in a cohort of 18 patients with moderately severe COVID-19 disease.

The company said a major challenge for hospital services during the current pandemic is the high level of care required for those patients experiencing rapid deterioration of lung function, leading to acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock and major disabilities or death.

It said the analyses were conducted in the first 18 patients enrolled in the study on blood samples collected on days 1, 3, 7, 14 and 28 of treatment.

"That analysis shows that those biomarkers associated with worsening COVID-19 disease, notably IL-1b, IL-4, IL-6, IL-10, TNF-a, CRP and D-dimer, did not rise in any of the 18 patients, including falling in a number of patients.

"While correlation of these responses with clinical data will soon be underway, these interim findings point to a protective effect of Veyonda against disease progression and the development of a cytokine storm," said the company.

Associate Professor Michael Gantier of Hudson Institute of Medical Research, said, "While further correlations with clinical data are essential to gain a full picture, the fact that none of the inflammatory biomarkers progressed in these cohorts of moderately sick COVID-19 patients is aligned with a putative protective effect of Veyonda."

Graham Kelly, Noxopharm CEO, said, "The world is facing an enormous challenge in vaccinating enough people to achieve global herd-immunity in the face of waves of emerging mutant strains of the virus. Until we successfully meet that challenge, millions of people are likely to continue to suffer severe COVID-19 disease involving major disabilities and death.

"That is where we see Veyonda playing a key role, with its STING blocking action stopping the inflammatory process in patients with moderate COVID-19 disease moving from having a positive effect, to being seriously self-destructive. The interim data released today points to Veyonda delivering on this promise.

"Treatments that stop patients progressing into needing high-level health care such as mechanical ventilation and occupying ICU beds is a major industry goal. Our confidence is growing that Veyonda will form part of meeting that goal, and in so doing, potentially save many lives and deliver shareholders a potentially highly valuable and much sought after asset."

Leukaemia Foundation backs blood cancer research projects

May 6, 2021

The Leukaemia Foundation has announced the latest round of research funded through Cancer Australia's priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme.

The scheme was established by Cancer Australia and managed in collaboration with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). It supports research that is designed to reduce the impact of cancer on the community and improve outcomes for people affected by cancer. It also coordinates cancer research at the national level by bringing together government and non-government funders.

Queensland's Dr Kyohei Nakamura and South Australia's Dr Hannah Wardill were among ten successful applicants for the latest round.

Cancer immunologist Dr Nakamura, who leads the Immune Targeting in Blood Cancers lab at the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, has recently identified an immunosuppressive factor that could be responsible for resistance to antibody-drug rituximab and other immunotherapies commonly used to improve outcomes for B-cell lymphoma patients.

Dr Nakamura is now aiming to develop a novel therapeutic approach to improve the body's immune response against this blood cancer.

Close to 7,000 people are currently being diagnosed with lymphoma each year. This is projected to jump a further 147 per cent by 2035 – making for an extra 10,000 Australians being told they have lymphoma every year.

Blood cancer in children is often treated with chemotherapy and transplantation of immune cells from a donor. Yet these donated cells can sometimes be treated as foreign by the child's body, resulting in debilitating and potentially deadly graft vs host disease (GvHD).

Dr Wardill, an NHMRC Early Career Fellow at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), will focus on GvHD in paediatric patients who undergo stem cell transplant by testing new ways to minimise or prevent GvHD by altering the gut microbiome.

Blood cancer remains the most commonly diagnosed cancer for Australian children aged up to 14. Currently, 413 children in this age group are being diagnosed with a blood cancer every year, a figure that is projected to more than double by 2035.

"Over the past 10 years, we have seen lymphoma incidence rise by an enormous 37%, and sadly blood cancer is still accounting for more than 40% of all cancer diagnoses in children under 14 years. We also know GvHD can have an incredibly devastating impact the body and tragically also carries a 55% mortality rate," said Leukaemia Foundation CEO Chris Tanti.

"These sobering statistics demand urgent attention and clearly demonstrate that there has never been a more important time to invest in crucial research projects like Dr Nakamura and Dr Wardill's to improve treatment options and quality of life for those impacted by these diseases and associated complications.

"On behalf of the Leukaemia Foundation, I sincerely congratulate Dr Nakamura and Dr Wardill for their success and we look forward to seeing their research translate into improved results for Australians in our community living with lymphoma and paediatric blood cancer."

Mr Tanti continued, "Research is a crucial tool to improve blood cancer survival rates, design better treatment pathways and ensure Australians can live well with their diagnosis.

"With more than 5,600 Australians losing their life to a blood cancer each year and more than 186,000 people expected to die from blood cancers by 2035, ensuring increased and sustained investment in research is a powerful key to drive down these figures and save lives."

Over the past two decades, the Leukaemia Foundation has invested almost \$55 million in research, including supporting over 370 researchers across 290 research projects, through PhD scholarships and research grants, at over 50 hospitals, research institutes and universities.