

Cellestia Biotech AG: A novel method from Basel to fight cancer



Michael Bauer, CEO of Cellestia Biotech AG (Img: Cellestia Biotech AG)

Some varieties of cancer don't have a specific therapy available to date. Cellestia Biotech AG is aiming to change this for the worldwide over 250'000 patients who are annually diagnosed with so-called "NOTCH dependent" cancers. "NOTCH" is a cell-to-cell communication or signaling pathway, which plays a central role in cell differentiation, growth and stem cell maintenance. If it is inappropriately inaptly activated by mutations, the signaling pathway becomes a major driver for NOTCH-dependent cancers. Cellestia is currently developing CB-103, a novel, first-in-class, oral pan-NOTCH inhibitor with a unique mode of action for treatment.

Office in Basel, research labs in Lausanne



*Dr. Rajwinder Lehal
(Img: Cellestia Biotech AG)*

The company has a principal office at the Technologiepark Basel and is conducting research at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) laboratories. "Cellestia was founded in 2014 as a spin-off from EPFL by Prof. Freddy Radtke and Dr. Rajwinder Lehal", explains Michael Bauer, CEO of Cellestia Biotech AG. "In 2015, a team of senior pharma executives - including myself - joined the company as investors and co-founders." That was when the company opened its head office in Basel.

"Basel provides us excellent networking opportunities and offers great infrastructure, it's also a top location for fundraising and has access to a highly professional talent pool", lists Bauer as the reasons for moving to the city at the Rhine river. "And not to forget is the vicinity to big

pharma such as Roche and Novartis”, he adds. But the search for an ideal location was difficult. “Rentals in Basel are priced high, and ideal offices are scarce”, says Bauer.

Phase I for lead candidate CB-103



*Technologiepark Basel
(Img: Technologiepark Basel AG)*

In the end, they found their ideal location in the Technologiepark Basel. “It’s great for a start-up like us: You get a plug-and-play set-up, a dynamic environment and first-class infrastructure at an affordable price.” Michael Bauer calls it “an ideal biotope” where they even knew some of their neighbors from earlier projects. “We can only recommend the Technologiepark Basel for innovative life sciences start-ups”, he sums up.

And indeed, setting up at the Technologiepark Basel seems to work for Cellestia: The company has reached clinical development stage and treated their first cancer patients in December 2017 in the ongoing Phase I-IIa first-in-man clinical trial with CB-103. Michael Bauer hopes to conclude Phase I by mid-2019, starting with Phase II shortly after. “It’s still far away, but we hope that by 2022, Cellestia Biotech AG will reach approval for our first product.”

Cellestia Biotech AG

Cellestia Biotech AG was founded in 2014 as a spin-off from the Swiss University EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne). The privately-owned clinical stage biopharmaceutical company, which is located in the Technologiepark Basel and at EPFL Lausanne, develops innovative first-in-class anti-cancer drugs originated from its discovery platform. Led by an experienced management team, Cellestia has attracted leading clinical oncologists and high-calibre scientific advisors who are supporting the development program. The company is financed through private equity investors, including PPF Group, a large European Investment Fund, and has to date raised close to CHF 12 million to advance the lead program and the subsequent pipeline. At present, Cellestia is raising a series A financing round to fund the upcoming clinical program.

www.cellestia.com

Technologiepark Basel

The Technologiepark Basel is the premier address for early-stage tech start-ups in Basel that transform knowledge into marketable products and services. It offers a collaboration-friendly, yet business-driven environment and is part of the rapidly growing Stücker Park in the dynamic northern part of Basel. Tenants are selected carefully to ensure a high level of innovation.

www.technologiepark.ch