

NBE Therapeutics: Cancer drugs with a twist for fewer side effects



Ulf Grawunder, CEO of NBE Therapeutics (Img: Technologiepark Basel AG)

„We are developing innovative cancer drugs with a twist“, says Ulf Grawunder, CEO and founder of NBE Therapeutics. The company was founded 2012 in Basel and has ever since been based at the Technologiepark Basel, where the start-up is conducting research in 6 rented lab spaces.

The company's goal is to develop a cancer drug based on tumor specific antibodies carrying highly potent cellular toxins, which are called ADCs (Antibody Drug Conjugates). This means, an antibody for a specific type of cancer will carry a very toxic compound. The linkage between the antibody and the toxin should only release the toxin, if the ADC has reached the cancer cells. The result is a targeted treatment with fewer side effects than a typical chemotherapy. Currently, NBE Therapeutics is developing ADCs against four different types of cancer.

23 employees and 41.5 million euros raised



*Technologiepark Basel
(Img: Technologiepark Basel AG)*

NBE Therapeutics is Ulf Grawunder's second start-up. His first company was 4-Antibody, which was sold to Agenus in 2014 – and after 10 years being with the company he left in 2012. “I had an idea for another biotech company and gave it a try”, explains Grawunder. And the idea seems to work: Since 2012, NBE Therapeutics has grown to 23 employees and raised 41.5 million euros in funds from investors and research grants.

The Technologiepark Basel was his first choice. “With 4-Antibody, we were the first tenant at the Technologiepark Basel – so I had the opportunity to take part in shaping this wonderful new environment for start-ups in Basel“, smiles Ulf Grawunder. “Additionally, Basel is a leading life sciences location and the Technologiepark Basel provides an excellent environment for innovative start-ups in this field.”

No matter whether it's about support, infrastructure, rental prices or personal contacts: Ulf Grawunder is enthralled by the offerings of the Technologiepark Basel. “The start-up community here is very open in exchanging practical insights on funding and business opportunities – essential knowledge for growing start-ups.” Ulf Grawunder wouldn't think twice about moving to the Technologiepark again and gladly shares this experience with other founders, who are asking him for advice.

Clinical trials in cancer patients from 2020 onwards



*Technologiepark Basel
(Img: Technologiepark Basel AG)*

It is NBE Therapeutics' vision to become a leader in antibody-based drug development by developing its own portfolio of drugs until demonstration of a clinical proof-of-concept in humans. Ulf Grawunder says: “We have come a long way: NBE Therapeutics developed potent antibody discovery techniques and enzymatic, site-specific toxin-antibody conjugation technologies, and we plan to utilize these pioneering technologies for the development of a robust therapeutic antibody and ADC drug pipeline”.

The next goal of NBE Therapeutics is to start clinical trials in cancer patients with their first ADC lead candidate in 2020. “If we receive proof of concept in clinical trials, it will open up many possibilities for the future of NBE Therapeutics”, explains Grawunder. Going public may be an option, but one way or another, this small company from Basel will need a potent pharma partner in order to survive on the market. “But that's all still up in the air”, according to CEO Ulf Grawunder.

NBE Therapeutics AG

NBE Therapeutics is a privately held Swiss biotech company that was founded at the Technologiepark Basel in 2012. The company focuses on the development of next-generation antibody drug conjugates (ADCs) for improved treatment of cancer. ADCs combine the principle of specific targeting of cancer cells via antibodies with chemotherapy.

NBE Therapeutics has 23 employees, and the management team includes Ulf Grawunder (CEO) and Roger Beerli (CSO). Since the beginning of 2013 the company is financially backed by the Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Fund, and since 2016 also by the PPF BioVenture Fund, who are co-leading investor syndicate, which includes other private life sciences investors.

www.nbe-therapeutics.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