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Arexis acquires project in lipid metabolism

Arexis has acquired a project concerning human bile salt stimulated lipase, BSSL, from AstraZeneca. The aim of the project is to develop a new type of substitution therapy for patients suffering from pancreatic dysfunction, for example for those with cystic fibrosis, and also for preterm infants.

The acquisition includes transfer of intellectual property and know how within the BSSL project previously owned by AstraZeneca to Arexis. AstraZeneca will receive milestone and royalty payments. In addition, Arexis has acquired an exclusive licence to the patents covering BSSL held by Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, OMRF, a licence earlier held by AstraZeneca.

– All in all, the patents from AstraZeneca and the license agreement with OMRF give us full control of the BSSL project. We now have the rights to all future development and all therapeutic indications. The project fits well into our portfolio and has an attractive profile. The fact that the enzyme is designed for oral administration is a unique and important advantage, says Lennart Hansson, CEO at Arexis.

Following the acquisition Arexis is now continuing the clinical project for treatment of cystic fibrosis and plans to initiate clinical development of a product for preterm infants.

A phase II study in Belgium was recently concluded where the addition of BSSL to the ordinary enzyme treatment showed good effects on fat uptake in patients with cystic fibrosis.

– On the basis of these promising results we have started an additional phase II study in Sweden to more specifically monitor the qualitative effects on lipid uptake, says Björn Löwenadler, Chief Scientific Officer at Arexis.

BSSL is a naturally occurring lipid degrading enzyme with the ability to degrade a large spectrum of lipids in food. It is present in the mature pancreas and breast milk. Despite the fact that people suffering from cystic fibrosis largely lack BSSL, it is not a part of the enzyme treatment available for these patients today. Nor is it included in formulae given to preterm infants.

Arexis is a pharmaceutical company conducting research based on genetics in the areas of metabolic and inflammatory diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and obesity. These are areas with largely unknown disease aetiology and where genetic predisposing factors play a role. Arexis was founded in 1999, has 25 employees and is operating in custom designed laboratories in the newly built Biotech Center in Gothenburg, Sweden.

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