

THE GOLD COAST BULLETIN

14 June, 2006

Leukemia drug trials

GOLD Coast-backed biotech company ChemGenex has launched new international trials for its anti-cancer drug.

ChemGenex, has launched a large, international phase 2/3 trial of Ceflatonin in patients with chronic myeloid leukemia who have developed a particular resistance to the current treatment, Gleevec.

The drug was recently granted orphan drug status by the United States Federal Drugs Administration, granted to drugs that can fulfil a potential unmet need.

In March, the Nasdaq and ASX-listed ChemGenex, 20 per cent owned by Surfers Paradise-based Charter Pacific, had a \$4.53 million half-year loss.

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Leukemia drug on fast track

Elizabeth Colman
Biotechs

LOCAL biotech company ChemGenex has pledged to devote "all resources" to the last round of clinical trials of its leukemia drug Ceflatonin.

The plant-derived drug is aimed at patients suffering chronic myeloid leukemia. It is being developed as an alternative for those who have developed resistance to current treatment, Gleevec, and acts to target and destroy cancerous cells.

ChemGenex operations vice-president James Campbell yesterday said the company would apply for fast-tracked approval from the US Food and Drug Administration.

Dr Campbell said he expected Ceflatonin would win registration by mid-2007 after the final and biggest trial.

"We are about to start the big one — final development stage designed around getting Ceflatonin approved in the US. Australian registration will follow from the US," he said.

Swiss-based pharmaceutical outfit Novartis, which manufactures Gleevec, is also working to develop an alternative for patients with resistance to the drug.

But Novartis, which secured a \$500 million deal from US biotech SGX Pharmaceuticals to develop the product, was in pre-clinical stage, Dr Campbell said.

"The best-case scenario would have them starting pre-clinical trials at the end of next year," Dr Campbell said.

"We understand the underlying genetics of complex diseases very well, we're identifying a subgroup of patients who have the most common mutation, we have strong data to show our drug will be efficacious in those patients. There is currently no other drug in development that addresses this group of patients that develop Gleevec resistance," he said.

The Geelong-based ChemGenex listed on the Nasdaq 12 months ago after it was formed in 2004 by a merger between Deakin University's AGT Biosciences and San Francisco-based GemGenex Therapeutics.

The trial, launched yesterday, will be carried out across the US and Europe.

Shares in ChemGenex were unchanged yesterday at 42.5c after dipping to 41.5c in afternoon trade.