

BioCentury

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EMERGING COMPANY PROFILE

BRIDGE TO POC

BY EMILY CUKIER-MEISNER, SENIOR WRITER

BRIM Biotechnology Inc. has assembled a team of translational science veterans to fill what it sees as a gap in Taiwanese drug development capabilities. The company plans to bring in preclinical projects with global commercialization potential and develop them through Phase Ia or IIb proof of concept, then sell them or find a partner to complete development outside of Taiwan or Asia.

BRIM seeks global rights to programs from academic groups, multinationals and biotechs. The company has four preclinical programs, including two cancer biologics and one dengue fever collaboration with a **Johnson & Johnson** unit.

“By the time we reach proof of concept in clinical studies, that’s where we pursue an exit strategy by out-licensing or collaborating with other companies,” said CEO Haishan Jang.

Jang was senior director at J&J’s Centocor Research and Development Inc. unit and spent the past five years working at private Taiwanese companies and research institutions affiliated with the Taiwanese government.

She said Taiwanese researchers often find translational science challenging because there is little in-country experience with preclinical and early clinical development, and few companies that offer such services in Asia.

For local academics and companies, BRIM can not only develop projects to POC, but also help find a multinational partner to bring the projects across the goal line, Jang said.

For multinationals, she said, BRIM can share risk in developing products in emerging markets such as Taiwan. She added that as a virtual company BRIM may be a more cost-effective partner than a global company.

According to Jang, BRIM’s senior scientific team includes veterans of large U.S. pharma and spans a range of translational medicine expertise including APIs, biomarkers, study design, regulatory, CMC, IP and law. The scientific team is based in the U.S. and works with the company’s Taiwan-based operations team.

BRIM BIOTECHNOLOGY INC.

Taipei, Taiwan

Technology: N/A

Disease focus: Cancer, infectious, ophthalmic

Clinical status: Preclinical

Founded: 2013 by Frank Lee and Haishan Jang

University collaborators: Mackay Memorial Hospital, Development Center for Biotechnology

Corporate partners: Janssen Pharmaceutica N.V., Compliment Corp.

Number of employees: 9

Funds raised: \$31 million

Investors: Top Taiwan Venture Capital, E. Sun Venture Capital, Mega International Commercial Bank, BRIM Cayman, BioEngine Venture Capital, China Investment & Development, Yuanta Venture Capital

CEO: Haishan Jang

Patents: Undisclosed

The operations team uses CROs for lab services. But Jang said BRIM designs its own protocols and analyzes the resulting data itself.

BRIM’s first deal was a 2014 worldwide co-development deal with Seattle oncology company **Compliment Corp.** for the two cancer biologics.

BRM131, for ovarian cancer, is a recombinant protein based on the adenovirus serotype 3 fiber knob that binds and opens tight junctions in solid tumors to increase penetration of chemotherapeutics.

BRM132 is a combination of Ad35k and rituximab in testing to treat B cell lymphoma. Ad35k is a recombinant protein based on the adenovirus serotype 35 fiber knob that binds and induces degradation of regulatory proteins that inhibit complement-dependent cytotoxicity (CDC). Jang said adding Ad35k could reactivate CDC-inducing mAbs like rituximab in resistant cancers.

BRIM is primarily funding the development costs in the profit-sharing deal; further details are undisclosed.

BRIM's next program came in a 1Q15 deal more typical of its business model. BRM421 is in development for topical ophthalmic applications such as dry eye disease. BRIM has exclusive worldwide rights to the short peptide derived from pigment epithelium derived factor (PEDF) from Taipei's Mackay Memorial Hospital.

This June BRIM began a collaboration and license agreement with J&J's Janssen Pharmaceutica N.V. unit for an undisclosed number of oral small molecules to treat all four major serotypes of dengue virus infection. According to BRIM, Taiwan is in the midst of its worst dengue outbreak in a decade.

J&J has an option to buy back or continue collaborating on lead program BRM211 once BRIM generates clinical POC. BRIM is eligible for milestones and royalties.

BRIM hopes to start clinical development of BRM132 and BRM421 in 2016, and BRM131 and BRM211 in 2017. It is seeking one or two additional projects in the next 6-12 months. Eventually, the company hopes to add other projects that address diseases prevalent in Taiwan.

BRIM has raised over \$31 million in venture funding and thinks its cash will last through a potential IPO on TPEX in 2017.

At least two other companies, [PharmaEngine Inc.](#) and [Aslan Pharmaceuticals Pte. Ltd.](#), are also focused on in-licensing and developing therapies in Taiwan, though so far neither has disclosed a project sourced from an academic group. 

COMPANIES AND INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED

Aslan Pharmaceuticals Pte. Ltd., Singapore

BRIM Biotechnology Inc., Taipei, Taiwan

Compliment Corp., Seattle, Wash.

Johnson & Johnson (NYSE:JNJ), New Brunswick, N.J.

Mackay Memorial Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan

PharmaEngine Inc. (TPEX:4162), Taipei, Taiwan

REFERENCES

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