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University of Washington biotech start-up teams up with Taiwan-based company to develop game-changing cancer therapies

Taiwan-based BRIM (Beyond Research and Innovative Medicines) Biotechnology has entered into an agreement with UW biotech start-up Compliment Corporation to develop Compliment's two oncology platform technologies based on the research of André Lieber, UW professor of medicine. Both technologies incorporate recombinant proteins aimed at improving efficacy and decreasing toxicity of current and new cancer therapies.

One of the major challenges in solid tumor therapy is that therapeutics often are only able to penetrate the first few cell layers of the tumor, preventing eradication of the whole tumor. Lieber found a method to open tight junctions between tumor cells, effectively modulating the structure of the solid tumor so that more of the therapeutic can penetrate to kill additional tumor cells.

The second technology will be tested initially in hematological, or blood-related, malignancies and targets the way tumors evade the patient's own immune system. Tumors do this by putting a protein called CD46 on their surface. This protein blocks a powerful arm of immunity, the complement system, and stops the immune system from destroying the cancerous cell. Removing this "cloaking" can unmask tumors, thereby enhancing therapeutic potency and allowing drugs to regain efficacy and kill the cancer.

"We have been working diligently on what we believe to be game-changing technologies, and it's great to have that validated by a co-development partner," said Lieber, Scientific Founder of Compliment Corporation.

BRIM Biotechnology, based in Taipei, Taiwan, was established in July 2013 by Frank Lee and Haishan Jang to develop affordable and high quality medicines through the translation of innovative science.

"These two protein platform technologies are unique, with novel mechanisms of action, and we believe they can have a great impact on cancer therapy," said Jang, CEO of BRIM. "We are extremely excited and enthusiastic about working with Compliment to develop them."

With a working team in Taipei and a senior scientific team in the U.S., Jang said BRIM is well poised to bring new therapies to the market.

"We are looking forward to pushing these technologies through development as efficiently as possible in partnership with BRIM," said Darrick Carter, CEO of Compliment.

Seattle-based Compliment Corporation spun out of the UW Center for Commercialization (C4C) in 2009 and is focused on improving cancer treatment by developing technology that can increase effectiveness of cancer therapies while simultaneously decreasing toxic side effects.

Several scientists from Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center collaborated with Lieber to bring these new technologies to market, including Charles Drescher and Nicole Urban, both members of the Fred Hutch Public Health Sciences Division; Oliver Press, interim director of the Clinical Research Division; Ajay Gopal, an associate member of the Clinical Research Division; Ron Manger, director of biologics production; and Doug Woodle, core staff at biologics. Funding was provided by grants from the National Cancer Institute, the Institute of Translational Health Sciences at UW, the Life Sciences Discovery Fund, and the C4C.

About the University of Washington Center for Commercialization (C4C)

As one of the leading recipients of federal funding for research, UW is producing innovations that have the power to change the world—from biofuel alternatives, to more effective treatments for Alzheimer's disease and brain cancer, to purification technology for drinking water in the developing world. The UW Center for Commercialization (C4C) is dedicated to helping UW researchers achieve the greatest impact from their innovations. UW C4C continues to implement new programs and integrate its resources to provide one of the best university commercialization centers for UW researchers.

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