

CEBINA reports potency of azelastine against emerging dominant variants of SARS-CoV-2 in laboratory testing

Vienna, 4th May 2020

CEBINA GmbH, an Austrian biotech company, today announces that azelastine, previously identified as a potential anti-COVID-19 drug, is equally potent against newly emerging dominant variants of SARS-CoV-2 compared to the original virus. Azelastine is available as an anti-allergy nasal spray and is currently being tested in a Phase 2 efficacy trial for the treatment of early-stage COVID-19 disease.

While unprecedented global efforts have brought a range of highly effective vaccines against COVID-19 to the market, emerging variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus may result in a worrying escape from immune protection offered by these vaccines. The B.1.1.7 variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (commonly known as UK variant) has so far been shown to be more contagious and to have the potential to cause more severe disease than the original SARS-CoV-2, while the B.1.351 variant (also known as South African variant) has been reported to evade the antibody response generated by the currently available vaccines. The variants that have emerged in Brazil (P.1) and India (B.1.617, B.1.618) share several of the mutations present in the UK and South African variants, and especially concerning is the E484K mutation that is a signature of immune escape of the viruses which leads to inefficacy of vaccines.

CEBINA, working with world leading structural biologist Professor Robert Konrat, has previously identified the generic anti-histamine drug azelastine as a potential anti-COVID-19 approach, having demonstrated that azelastine has potent inhibitory activity against SARS-CoV-2 in in vitro infection models. New data generated in collaboration with the Medical University of Innsbruck, shows that azelastine is effective in reducing viral replication of both the B.1.1.7 variant and B.1.351 variant with comparable potency as observed before with the original (Wuhan) SARS-CoV-2 virus.

“The unchanged potency of azelastine against the concerning variants of SARS-CoV-2 is highly relevant, as more and more variants of this virus are emerging and the immune protection offered by the currently available vaccines may not be effective enough against some of these variants. As the pandemic is causing catastrophic damage in some countries, we need to look for alternative approaches, anti-virals represent the most obvious one. A nasal spray active against SARS-CoV-2 irrespective of mutations can be a fundamental prophylactic or post-exposure solution to prevent the progression to symptomatic COVID-19 disease in infected individuals, while also reducing the spread of the virus and its variants in the population” - commented Eszter Nagy, MD PhD, CEO, CSO and founder of CEBINA GmbH.

A clinical trial is currently being conducted in collaboration with CEBINA's partner URSAPHARM Arzneimittel GmbH to verify the efficacy of URSAPHARM's azelastine containing Nasal Spray, Pollival® as anti-COVID-19 approach. The recruitment of SARS-CoV-2 positive patients has been completed and the readout on whether the use of a nasal spray containing azelastine can achieve a meaningful reduction in viral load in the nasal cavity, therefore positively influencing the course of the disease, is expected in May.

ABOUT CEBINA

CEBINA GmbH – Central European Biotech Incubator and Accelerator (<http://www.cebina.eu/>) is an Austrian-based company offering in house research, development, financing and management capabilities to early and medium stage biotech companies. CEBINA is also pursuing its own research & development projects, in particular in the infectious diseases field and has initiated multiple projects to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

* * *

CONTACT

Sophie Zettl, PhD

Vice President Business Development

CEBINA GmbH

+ 43 676 3731595

sophie.zettl@cebina.eu