

Drug Induces Remission Of Mesothelioma In Mice; Human Trials Anticipated

PERTH, Australia — Solbec Pharmaceuticals on Nov. 23 reported that its cancer-fighting drug Coramsine induced total remission of mesothelioma in mice in a recent study.

Solbec said that when combined with immunotherapy, Coramsine brought about total remission of malignant mesothelioma in mice and that the cured animals were resistant to the reinduction of the cancer. Solbec reports that Coramsine, in combination with the immune-triggering compound CpG, not only killed the mesothelioma cancer cells but also boosted the response of the immune system to other cancerous tumors.

Human trials of the immunotherapy/drug combination are anticipated, Solbec reported. Previously, Phase I human trials involving only treatment with Coramsine were conducted at the Sir Gairdner Hospital in Perth.

The Solbec study was conducted by scientists at the University of Western Australia's Tumor Immunology Group and was funded by Solbec with support from the Australian government's Biotechnology Innovation Fund.

"If this finding is replicated in patients with mesothelioma or other cancers, we believe that Coramsine™ could play an important role in clinical management of malignancy," Solbec professor John Papadimitriou said. "The results go a long way toward confirming that Coramsine™ causes an immune response to cancer. The proof will come by trialing combination therapy in humans."

Immune Response

The primary aim of the recent study was to learn how Coramsine primes the immune system and whether it could bring about long-term remission of mesothelioma. During the research, scientists found that by using Coramsine, three important criteria for immunological activity were satisfied. According to the study, with Coramsine, mesothelioma tumors in animals are effectively destroyed and the killing of mesothelioma tissue by SBP002 actually increases the quantity of tumor antigens in the lymph nodes that drain the tumor, which is important given that the antigens induce a positive immune response.

The researchers also found that unlike most other cancer treatments, SBP002 does not destroy lymphocytes. Lymphocytes recognize antigens and play a crucial role in the immune response, according to the researchers.

Coramsine contains two compounds extracted from a plant known as the "Devil's Apple" or "Devil's Weed." The immune compound CpG refers to two bases normally found in DNA, cytosine and guanine, with phosphate in between.

According to the federal government of Australia, health experts predict that more than 10,000 mesothelioma cases will be identified in the country by 2020. ■