Avacta Group plc

Avacta is planning to submit an IND/CTA application in early 2020 to test the TMAC™ linker in a Phase I study in patients with selected tumours. The IND (Investigational New Drug) submission relates to the US application process while the CTA (Clinical Trial Application) applies to the European market. This is good news for the company as Avacta is in a position to test this critical TMAC linker in humans early in 2020, well ahead of its original plans.

Avacta's tumour microenvironment activated drug conjugates or 'TMAC'™ represent a new form of cancer immunotherapy which Avacta co-invented with its partner, Tufts University Medical School. TMAC combines Affimers with chemotherapies in a single drug using a linker that is designed to only release the chemotherapy in the tumour microenvironment.

This allows chemotherapies, which are too potent to be given to patients systematically, to be combined with Affimer immune-checkpoint therapies. Avacta has noted previously that single cancer immunotherapies have limited overall response rates and combining immune checkpoint modulators such as PD-1 and PD-L1 with chemotherapy improves patients' responses.

To test the TMAC linker in humans for the first time, a chemotherapy called doxorubicin has been modified with the linker rendering it inactive and harmless until the linker is cleaved in the tumour releasing active doxorubicin. Doxorubicin has well known safety issues limiting its dosing and the specific patients that can be treated. The global market for doxorubicin is expected to grow from $0.9bn in 2019 to $1.4bn in 2025 and given that Avacta's TMAC linker has been shown to increase the maximum tolerated dose of doxorubicin six fold in pre-clinical studies in mice, a successful outcome in humans will not only de-risk the TMAC programme but also has the potential to accelerate the growth in the doxorubicin market significantly with Avacta representing a key commercial player.

Avacta intends to submit an IND/CTA application for a phase I clinical study of the TMAC linker-doxorubicin in early 2020. This trial will comprise a dose escalation study in patients with selected solid tumours including advanced and metastatic high-grade soft tissue sarcoma. Avacta states that the successful functioning of the TMAC linker will be reflected in the tumour shrinkage rate as doxorubicin is released with the treatment better tolerated by patients because of the tumour targeting effect of the linker.

The TMAC programme indicates that a solution to combine chemotherapy with immune checkpoint inhibitors without exposing the whole body to the chemo-toxin (in this case, doxorubicin) is highly feasible. Avacta notes that the cancer immunotherapy market is currently worth $60bn and is forecast to double by 2025. Within this rapidly growing market, Avacta TMAC and bi-specific immunotherapies are designed to compete strongly through improved clinical benefits to patients. In addition, through Avacta's exclusive right to commercialise TMAC drug conjugates, the company has the potential to further expand the cancer immunotherapy market by benefitting patients which do not respond to single checkpoint inhibitors.

Stock Data

Share Price:	32.5p
Market Cap:	£37.8m
Shares in issue:	16.16m

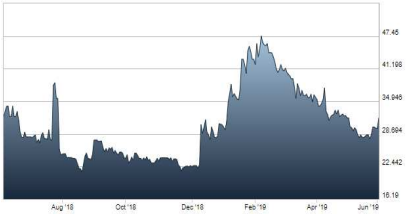
Company Profile

Sector:	Healthcare
Ticker:	AVCT
Exchange:	AIM

Activities

Avacta is a biotechnology company which has developed the proprietary Affimer® technology platform, a unique engineered alterative to antibodies. Affimer proteins can be developed quickly for drug development and a wide range of life sciences applications in the diagnostics and research sectors.

Share price performance chart



Source: LSE

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