



BERGENBIO PRESENTS PRECLINICAL COVID-19 DATA AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON RETROVIRUSES AND OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS (CROI 2021)

Bergen, Norway, 6 March 2021– BerGenBio ASA (OSE:BGBIO), a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company developing novel, selective AXL kinase inhibitors for severe unmet medical need, today delivered a Science Spotlight oral presentation on preclinical COVID-19 data at the annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), taking place from 6-10 March 2021.

The presentation was led by BerGenBio's collaborator, Professor Wendy Maury, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Iowa (Iowa City, USA), who presented data showing that AXL enhances the ability of SARS-CoV-2 to infect cell lines from the human airway, increasing the amount of virus measured in those cells. Treating the human cell lines, Vero E6 and human ACE2-expressing A549 lung cancer cell lines, with the AXL kinase inhibitor, bemcentinib reduces the amount of SARS-CoV-2 virus infecting these cells, and it does this by reducing ACE2-mediated viral cell entry by endocytosis, rather than at the cell surface.

Additionally an *in vivo* study also measured the effect of bemcentinib to treat a type of coronavirus which naturally infects mice - murine hepatitis virus (MHV). In this study, not only was bemcentinib found to significantly inhibit the viral load of MHV found in the liver of these animals, but it also significantly enhanced signatures of a type I IFN response, a potent mediator of the innate antiviral response.

In conclusion, the effect of bemcentinib demonstrated potent antiviral effects in preclinical SARS-CoV-2 and other coronavirus models. Further, the findings support BerGenBio's ongoing Phase II trial evaluating bemcentinib for the treatment of hospitalised COVID-19 patients in South Africa and India.

The presentation will be made available on BerGenBio's website under 'Presentations'.

Full details of the presentation are as follows:

Title: Targeting the receptor AXL by bemcentinib prevents SARS-CoV-2 infection

Author: Professor Wendy Maury, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Iowa (Iowa City, USA)

Abstract No. 2672

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About AXL

AXL kinase is a cell membrane receptor and an essential mediator of the biological mechanisms underlying life-threatening diseases.

In COVID-19, AXL has two synergistic mechanisms of action, it acts a co-receptor to ACE2, to which the spike protein of the Sars-Cov-2 virus attaches and enters the host cell, and AXL expression is upregulated that leads to suppression of the Type 1 Interferon immune response by host cells and in their environment. Research data confirms bemcentinib inhibits SARS-CoV-2 host cell entry and promotes the anti-viral Type I interferon response.

In cancer, increase in AXL expression has been linked to key mechanisms of drug resistance and immune escape by tumour cells, leading to aggressive metastatic cancers. AXL suppresses the body's immune response to tumours and drives treatment failure across many cancers. High AXL expression defines a very poor prognosis subgroup in most cancers. AXL inhibitors, such as bemcentinib, therefore, have potential high value as monotherapy and as the cornerstone of cancer combination therapy, addressing significant unmet medical needs and multiple high-value market opportunities. Research has also shown that AXL mediates other aggressive diseases including fibrosis.

About Bemcentinib

Bemcentinib (formerly known as BGB324), is a potentially first-in-class selective AXL inhibitor in a broad phase II clinical development programme. Ongoing clinical trials are investigating bemcentinib in multiple solid and haematological tumours, in combination with current and emerging therapies (including immunotherapies, targeted therapies and chemotherapy), and as a single agent. Bemcentinib targets and binds to the intracellular catalytic kinase domain of AXL receptor tyrosine kinase and inhibits its activity. Increase in AXL function has been linked to key mechanisms of drug resistance and immune escape by tumour cells, leading to aggressive metastatic cancers.

About BerGenBio ASA

BerGenBio is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on developing transformative drugs targeting AXL as a potential cornerstone of therapy for aggressive diseases, including immune-evasive, therapy resistant cancers. The company's proprietary lead candidate, bemcentinib, is a potentially first-in-class selective AXL inhibitor in a broad phase II clinical development programme focused on combination and single agent therapy in lung cancer, leukaemia and COVID-19. A first-in-class functional blocking anti-AXL antibody, tilvestamab, is undergoing phase I clinical testing. In parallel, BerGenBio is developing a companion diagnostic test to identify patient populations most likely to benefit from AXL inhibition: this is expected to facilitate more efficient registration trials supporting a precision medicine-based commercialisation strategy.

BerGenBio is based in Bergen, Norway with a subsidiary in Oxford, UK. The company is listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange (ticker: BGBIO). For more information, visit www.bergenbio.com

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This information is subject to the disclosure requirements pursuant to section 5-12 of the Norwegian Securities Trading Act.