Hopes for TB vaccine boosted

The world’s leading candidate for a tuberculosis vaccine, developed at Oxford University, is to move into the next stage of development.

Tuberculosis is a global problem, infecting millions worldwide. TB, which is caused by the Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacterium, is the world’s second leading cause of death from infectious disease in adults, after HIV/AIDS, according to the World Health Organization.

Over one third of the world’s population is infected with the disease, and an estimated 1.7 million people die of tuberculosis every year. One of ten people infected will develop the active form of the disease during their lifetime. Drug-resistant strains including multi-drug resistant TB and extensively drug-resistant TB are on the rise, raising concerns about the efficacy of the current BCG vaccine and leaving many patients without effective treatment. This year, the World Health Organization reported the highest rates of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis ever recorded.

A joint venture between the University of Oxford and Emergent BioSolutions Inc has been formed to develop the vaccine.

Isis has exclusively licensed the MVA85A tuberculosis vaccine candidate and related technology to the Consortium. If successful, this would be the first new vaccine licensed to prevent tuberculosis in over 80 years with major implications for control of the worldwide TB epidemic.

The Oxford-Emergent Tuberculosis Consortium has secured £8 million from the Wellcome Trust and the Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation to fund a clinical trial to test the vaccine's efficacy. The Phase Iib trial will involve 3,000 infants in South Africa, and is likely to begin in 2009.

Venturefest 2008 – 10 Years of Success

Isis played its full role at Venturefest 2008, the 10th year that the event has provided professional support, advice and funding for early-stage and fast growth business. This year’s event was held at the Unipart site in the south of the city. Isis has been involved from the outset and this year we continued with our sponsorship of the event, Isis Enterprise had a display stand, and we co-chaired the Universities Technologies Seminar with the Research & Business Development Office at Oxford Brookes University.

Four Oxford technologies were presented at the Seminar and we are grateful to the speakers for taking part: Dr Kevin Matthews; Professor Alison Noble; Dr Richard Wade-Martins and Professor Hagan Bayley.

Oxford Spin-out Equity Management

Dr Chris Towler has started as the new Director of Oxford Spin-out Equity Management, a new group charged with managing the University’s shareholdings in its spin-out companies and investing where it sees fit.

James Mallinson, whose role has included managing the relationship between the University and its spin-outs for a number of years, has now moved into OSEM to work with Chris.

Chris’s arrival marks a significant step-up in this activity for the University and Isis. Whilst OSEM reports directly into the University, Chris and James are based in Isis’s offices in Summertown. Chris has spent the last few years in a senior management position at Imperial College London.