ENA Respiratory Advances COVID-19 Preventative Therapy through AU$32 Million Funding Round

More info

- *Round jointly led by Brandon Capital and Minderoo Foundation with co-investment from Uniseed will support the clinical development of INNA-051*
- *Company appoints President and Chief Scientific Officer of the COPD Foundation and respiratory therapy expert Ruth Tal-Singer, Ph.D., to Board of Directors*

Sydney, Australia, 15 June – ENA Respiratory, a biotechnology company developing a first-in-class nasal spray for the prevention of COVID-19 and other respiratory viral infections, announced today that it secured up to AU$32m investment and appointed Ruth Tal-Singer, Ph.D., to its Board of Directors. The new financing will advance INNA-051, ENA Respiratory's lead clinical candidate being developed to activate innate immunity in the nose, the primary site of most respiratory virus infections including COVID-19. The company is poised to initiate its Phase I human safety study of INNA-051 in Australia in the coming weeks. The milestone-based financing round was jointly led by Australian life science investors Brandon Capital Partners and Minderoo Foundation, with co-investment from Uniseed.

“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a major health crisis worldwide. Alongside vaccines, there is a need for complementary approaches to help protect the most vulnerable people and also provide protection against emerging variants,” said Christophe Demaison, Ph.D., co-founder and CEO of ENA Respiratory. “INNA-051 is seeking to address this need. The financing announced today from the Minderoo Foundation and existing investors will expedite development of INNA-051 with the aim to demonstrate efficacy against COVID-19 in the clinic.”

Unlike other potential prophylactic approaches to COVID, INNA-051 directly stimulates the host’s innate immune defence that plays a key role in clearing viruses and other pathogens. A gold-standard animal study performed by Public Health England (PHE) and published in the peer-reviewed journal EBioMedicine[1]demonstrated that ENA’s nasal spray reduces COVID-19 viral replication by up to 96 percent. If humans respond in a similar way, the spray could be used to protect people very quickly from infection and lower community transmission. Based on its mechanism of action and non-clinical studies demonstrating efficacy against multiple, non-related respiratory viruses, INNA-051 has the potential to prevent existing and emerging respiratory viral infections, such as COVID-19 and its variants.

Video: ENA Respiratory's AU$32M funding round will support development of its COVID-19 preventative therapy.

"We recognize that in addition to vaccines, the world needs safe, convenient, broad-spectrum anti-viral therapies to win the fight against COVID-19," said Chris Smith, Ph.D., Chairman of ENA Respiratory. "INNA-051 could be incredibly helpful in protecting at-risk populations such as health workers, the elderly and immunocompromised patients against existing and emerging variants. Because INNA-051 is not virus-specific, it could also play a key role beyond fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, in combating seasonal flu or any future respiratory viral outbreaks."

Ruth Tal-Singer, Ph.D., COPD Foundation President and Chief Scientific Officer, Joins ENA Board of Directors

The company also announced the appointment of Ruth Tal-Singer, Ph.D., to its Board of Directors. U.S.-based Dr Tal-Singer is internationally recognized as an innovative, patient-focused, and highly analytical health care leader and clinical scientist with extensive research and development experience. Her wide-ranging technical and scientific knowledge comprises molecular biology, immunology,

application of digital technology and experimental medicine trials. She has a proven history of successfully leading international public and private partnerships through critical advancements and progressing clinical trials and large observational cohorts. She currently serves as President and Chief Scientific Officer of the nonprofit COPD Foundation, where she leads the organization's mission to accelerate the development and adoption of novel treatments that improve the lives of individuals with COPD, bronchiectasis and nontuberculous mycobacterial (NTM) lung disease. Previously, she held several senior roles at GSK Pharmaceuticals, including Vice President of Medical Innovation, Vice President in Respiratory R&D, and Medicine Development Leader. She was elected as GSK Senior Fellow for advancing innovation and mentoring early-career scientists.

"Dr Tal-Singer brings nearly 25 years of experience leading the research and development of respiratory therapies, from therapeutic target identification to phases I-IV research and regulatory approvals, as well as collaborations with academic and industry partners," Dr Demaison said. "Her significant expertise in research, patient and community support, public education and advocacy will help guide us as we accelerate the development of INNA-051 to address the COVID-19 pandemic and other significant respiratory illnesses."

Dr Tal-Singer received her critical care nursing certification from Tel Aviv University and her Ph.D. in molecular biology and microbiology from the University of Pennsylvania. Earlier in her career, she served as an officer in the Israeli Defense Forces Medical Corps and was

assistant head nurse of the pediatric critical care unit at Sheba Medical Center in Israel.

“The COVID-19 pandemic showed the significant need for new therapies to prevent and treat respiratory viruses that impact millions around the globe each year,” Dr Tal-Singer said. “ENA Respiratory’s novel therapy stimulates innate immunity to target viruses in the nose. It has the potential to impact the way we treat and prevent not just COVID-19, but influenza, the common cold, and other respiratory illnesses. I’m thrilled to join the Board as the company launches its next stage of clinical research.”

[1] Proud PC, Tsitoura D, Watson RJ et al. Prophylactic intranasal administration of a TLR2/6 agonist reduces upper respiratory tract viral shedding in a SARS-CoV-2 challenge ferret model. EBioMedicine. 2021 Jan;63:103153. doi: 10.1016/j.ebiom.2020.103153. Epub 2020 Dec 3.