

Press Release

Cash injection against hepatic diseases

Millions worth of funding will go to Halle. The Federal government supports a Scil Proteins GmbH research project with 1.6 million Euros over the next three years. The biotech company from Halle, together with scientists from the University of Regensburg, is working on an early detection method and new active pharmaceutical agents. In the future, chronic hepatic diseases could be detectable at an early stage eliminating the need for invasive examination methods to determine the scope of liver damage and also enable physicians to treat chronic hepatic diseases in the initial stages. In Germany, alcoholic abuse and viral infections are the main causes of liver fibrosis.

Fighting liver fibrosis

With the help of federal grants, Scil Proteins GmbH intensify research on the diagnosis and treatment of liver fibrosis.

Halle (Saale), February 2009. In cooperation with the University of Regensburg, the Scil Proteins GmbH in Halle (Saale) researches and develops active pharmaceutical agents and means of diagnosis for chronic hepatic diseases in their pharmaceutical business unit (Scil Proteins Pharma). The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) will support the project with 1.6 million Euros over the next three years. The funds are granted as part of the funding programme "Health research: human research". The aim of the biotechnologists of Scil Proteins and the scientists of the University of Regensburg is to develop an innovative pharmaceutical method that allows for the detection as well as the treatment of liver fibrosis.

In Germany, it is mainly alcohol abuse and viral infections – such as Hepatitis B and C – as well as overweight and diabetes, which cause chronic disease of the liver. Frequently, they lead to a complete cicatrization of the liver, the so-called liver cirrhosis. So far, there is no method to diagnose the extent of the cicatrization of the hepatic tissue in an early stage without surgery. Furthermore, there is no clinically tested medication to stop such defects of the liver. The only possibility to treat patients with liver cirrhosis is liver transplantations. However, due to the small number of available donors, this method is restricted to only a few patients.

The scientists from Halle and Regensburg believe a protein, the recombinant cytokine MIA2, to be the key component for the successful development of a diagnostic kit for treatment and diagnosis of liver fibrosis. Two research teams headed by Prof. Dr. Anja Bosserhoff and PD Dr. Claus Hellerbrand (University of Regensburg) were able to show that MIA2 can be directed to stop liver fibrosis and could thus constitute a new therapeutic principle in the treatment of hepatic diseases. "We are confident", says PD Dr. Hellerbrand, "to be holding a new innovative product in our hands that will help a large number of patients to increase their quality of life".

Dr. Ulrike Fiedler (CEO of Scil Proteins GmbH): "MIA2, for the first time, allows the development of a non-invasive method in diagnosing liver fibrosis. Furthermore, the

administration of MIA2 may become the basis for a completely new form of therapy. However, it will still take a few years to develop the actual drug. Part of the funding programme constitutes pharmacological and toxicological studies, and the development of the production procedure for the drug, as well as the diagnostic kit. In our work we rely on long-term experience in the development of efficient production processes, which achieve a high output of active proteins through optimized in vitro folding.

About Scil Proteins Pharma:

Scil Proteins Production GmbH is the contract manufacturing organisation of Scil Proteins GmbH, a privately held company specializing in the research, development and production of complex recombinant proteins. Scil Proteins is active in two business areas: the development of new innovative biological agents, such as the Affilin®-molecules, and the contract biomanufacturing of recombinant proteins for clinical trials and market supply.

About the teams A. Bosserhoff/ C. Hellerbrand:

Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Anja Bosserhoff is professor for molecular pathology at the University of Regensburg, Germany. PD Dr. Claus Hellerbrand is head of research at the hospital for Internal Medicine I at the University Hospital Regensburg. The work of both teams focuses on the basic patho-mechanisms of hepatic diseases. Mrs. Bosserhoff and Mr. Hellerbrand found the MIA2 gene, and subsequently characterized its biological relevance. It was their idea to use MIA2 as the diagnostic and therapeutic agent in hepatic diseases. Mr. Hellerbrand is speaker for both BMBF funded projects that work on the implementation of this idea.

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