Interview with: Francoise Bono, EVP oncology, Evotec

Evotec, a drug discovery solutions company, is attending the marcus evans Discovery Summit 2016, in Europe.

What is the latest strategy in oncology research?

Cancer is a disease of vast complexity, however in recent years the understanding of the disease has improved markedly. Significant breakthroughs therapies have been found, such as targeted therapies, in which drugs target mutations that activate or inactivate signalling pathways that drive cancer development. The response rate to these drugs in the dedicated patient population is generally very good but the efficacy duration (resistance mechanisms) is low. More recently Immuno-oncology therapies are helpful in matching therapies with patients. Prognostic biomarkers identify somatic germ line mutations, changes in DNA methylation, elevated levels of microRNA (miRNA) and circulating tumour cells (CTC) or immunosuppressive cells in blood. Predictive biomarkers using molecular diagnostics are currently in use in clinical practice of personalised oncotherapy and will further develop in the next future.

Has there been any recent progress in biomarker discoveries in the field of oncology?

The last decade has seen significant advances in the development of biomarkers in oncology that play a critical role in molecular and cellular mechanisms which drive tumour initiation, maintenance and progression. Clinical molecular diagnostics and biomarker discoveries in oncology are advancing rapidly and these discoveries have fuelled the development of novel drug targets and new treatment strategies. Recent advances in multiplex genotyping technologies and high-throughput genomic profiling by next-generation sequencing allow for the rapid and comprehensive analysis of the cancer genome of individual patients even from very little tumour biopsy material. Predictive diagnostic biomarkers are helpful in matching therapies with patients. Prognostic biomarkers identify somatic germ line mutations, changes in DNA methylation, elevated levels of microRNA (miRNA) and circulating tumour cells (CTC) or immunosuppressive cells in blood. Predictive biomarkers using molecular diagnostics are currently in use in clinical practice of personalised oncotherapy and will further develop in the next future.

What would increase the success in drug discovery on oncology?

The tumour microenvironment is becoming recognised as an important contributor to cancer progression and drug resistance. Dysregulation of immune responses and the dialogue between tumour cells and various components in the microenvironment play pivotal roles in tumour progression. Future development of anticancer therapies should take the tumour microenvironment into consideration. With the increasing knowledge about the tumour microenvironment and the design of adapted translational biology studies, novel anticancer therapy may be facilitated and may have better chance for success in cancer eradication.

How does Evotec’s oncology research platform meet industry needs?

The principal pillars of growth in the oncology field for industry are the following: decrease the risk of failure in clinic by optimizing clinical translation, increase value creation by optimizing clinical positioning and increase attractiveness by focusing on first in class approaches.

Evotec had recently dedicated a research centre to oncology in the site known as Oncopole in Toulouse, France where biotech companies, academic labs and hospitals are dedicated to cancer therapies. In this very favourable environment Evotec has developed technological and scientific platforms in close collaboration with local academic and hospital collaborators dedicated to make available to industrial partners all the tools necessary to develop first in class oncology drugs with a clear translational path to clinical situation.

Tumour microenvironment is gradually recognised as an important contributor of cancer progression and drug resistance
About the Discovery Summit 2016

The 16th annual Global Discovery Summit is the premium forum bringing elite buyers and sellers together. The two track summit offers early drug discovery and preclinical R&D professionals and specialist solution providers an intimate environment for a focused discussion of key new drivers shaping discovery research and development.

www.discovery-summit.com

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About Evotec

Evotec is a drug discovery solutions company providing drug discovery expertise and capabilities to pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies as well as to academic institutions. Drug discovery solutions are provided in form of fee-for-service work, integrated drug discovery alliances, development partnerships, licensing of innovative drug candidates and consulting arrangements. The Company operates worldwide and has leading scientific experts, state-of-the-art technologies as well as key therapeutic expertise in the areas of neuroscience, pain, metabolic diseases, oncology, inflammation and infectious diseases.

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