

CombiGene: Subsidiary formed for veterinary medicine

On 30 June CombiGene's board voted to form a wholly owned subsidiary whose task will be to manage possible veterinary medical applications for CombiGene's gene therapeutic treatment method for epilepsy. The prevalence of epilepsy in dogs has been estimated at 2%. The condition often results in dogs having to be put down. In forming the subsidiary, CombiGene emphasizes that the veterinary medical application differs significantly from the human application, and that the two companies will operate separately and independently of each other.

CombiGene's treatment method uses gene therapy to upregulate the flow of the neurotransmitter NPY and the Y2 receptors which receive NPY in the affected area of the brain. Development is in the preclinical phase and the method must be proven to be effective and safe in the treatment of humans.

The question as to whether the method may even be suitable for treatment of dogs was raised by Danish secondary-school student Slàine Chaimbeul who, in 2011, contacted David Woldbye, associate professor at the University of Copenhagen. David Woldbye is one of CombiGene's two scientific founders and an internationally leading expert within his field. Under the supervision of David Woldbye, Slàine Chaimbeul wrote an essay on her idea, which won an annual award in Denmark in 2012. With Danish research-council funding, an initial study was conducted with Beagles at the University of Copenhagen during 2014 to fine-tune the treatment and to confirm its safety. The study, conducted together with researchers at Rigshospitalet and the University of Copenhagen, was a success. However, the researchers were not able to proceed with planning of the next study until this spring. In the new study, dogs of various breeds

that have been diagnosed by veterinarians as having difficult-to-treat, epileptic-type disorders will be treated and, hopefully, cured. An application for the study was approved in April by the Danish Council for Animal Research. Since CombiGene's patent approval also covers treatment of dogs and other animals, it was only natural that David Woldbye would contact CombiGene concerning sponsorship, which ultimately led to the formation of the new subsidiary.

"The veterinary sector is huge and many dog owners are prepared to pay a high price to keep their animals alive and healthy," says CombiGene board member and principal shareholder Lars Thunberg, who had previously recommended support for research in this area. "We have not actually done any thorough market research, but at least one veterinary medical company has expressed interest. The sponsorship funding amounts to about SEK 200,000 and we will investigate market potential more closely in conjunction with the study."

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"This is a study about dogs and it is for dogs," adds David Woldbye. "Regardless of whether it succeeds or not, unfortunately, no conclusions can be drawn from this study with respect to CombiGene's project concerning human patients. In the human project, we are working with completely different methods and models, and that project is, of course, our priority."

The subsidiary, CombiGene Vet AB, has share capital of SEK 50,000 but will soon receive capital injection amounting to about SEK 250,000 from CombiGene.

A report on the study in question will be issued in spring 2016 at the earliest, after which the company's ownership and future financing will be determined. The board consists of CombiGene's chairman, Arne Ferstad, and board members Morten Albrechtsen and Lars Thunberg. A CEO has yet to be appointed.

CombiGene AB in brief

By combining modern neuroscience with recent advances in gene delivery, CombiGene has developed a method shown to suppress epileptic seizures in preclinical studies. The company's current focus is on continuing to develop this method into an effective and safe therapy for epilepsy patients. It is the board's assessment that CombiGene's method has development potential as a means of treating other neurological disorders. CombiGene, which has offices in Medicon Village in Lund, Sweden, was founded on the basis of the results of research conducted at Lund University and the University of Copenhagen. The company is listed on AktieTorget. www.combigene.com

For further information:

CombiGene AB (publ)
Bengt Westrin, CEO
Tel: +46 70 - 265 48 62
email: bengt.westrin@combigene.com

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CombiGene AB (publ) Medicon Village, SE-223 81 Lund, Sweden
info@combigene.com