

# Spin-out targets better cancer treatment

January 25 2012

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A new Oxford University spin-out firm, Oxford Cancer Biomarkers Limited, is to develop technology to ensure that only patients who are likely to benefit from anti-cancer drugs will receive them and that the best treatment for each person can be quickly identified.

Isis Innovation, the University's technology transfer company, has licensed the CancerNav biomarker technology to Oxford Cancer Biomarkers Limited (OCB). The University also has an equity stake in the new firm.

OCB's founding scientists are Professor Nick La Thangue, and Professor David Kerr. The company has attracted a £3m investment from global biopharmaceutical services company Quintiles as part of a strategic alliance that will enable OCB to establish research facilities in Oxford to develop a range of predictive biomarkers, the first of which were developed by the founders at Oxford University.

'For the average cancer drug, usually a small proportion of patients respond, and the vast majority do not,' said Nick La Thangue, Professor of Cancer Biology at Oxford's Department of Oncology. 'A small number also become very sick because of the side effects of the drug. Our technology will not only benefit those patients who respond, but we can also avoid treating people with drugs that we know will make them sick. This means we can get the right drug to the right patient.'

'Many [cancer drugs](#) are expensive and it is difficult to justify widespread usage when we can't predict if a patient will respond well to a drug. The

biomarker approach we are offering through Oxford Cancer Biomarkers provides a way to identify responsive patients.

‘Drug developers can use the technology to design clinical trials which are faster and more likely to have a positive outcome. Regulators and health care providers can be presented with a more compelling justification of the health economics of a treatment.’

Glyn Edwards, Chief Executive of Oxford Cancer Biomarkers said: ‘This investment by a knowledgeable partner will allow OCB to establish and develop its core technology in Oxford. We expect the technology platform to produce a cascade of predictive biomarkers in the next few years. Quintiles and OCB aim to partner with drug and diagnostic companies to bring the benefits of this technology to a wide range of cancer patients.’

Ben Cons, vice president, Quintiles Corporate Development, said: ‘Biomarkers hold great promise to improve clinical trial success rates by identifying patient sub-groups most likely to respond to treatment, increasing the probability of success and improving patient safety.’

Tom Hockaday, Managing Director of Isis Innovation, said: ‘[Oxford Cancer Biomarkers](#) is a great example of Oxford research with huge potential to improve the treatment of cancer. Isis is delighted to have played a part in supporting its founders and the company.’

Provided by Oxford University

Citation: Spin-out targets better cancer treatment (2012, January 25) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-01-spin-out-cancer-treatment.html>

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