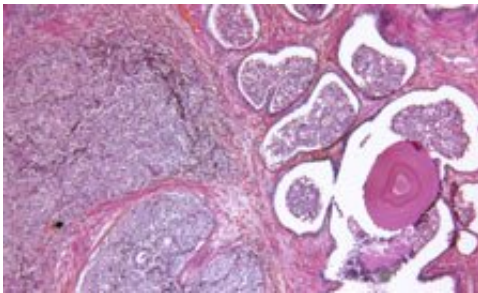


New drug has potential to treat broader range of cancers

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(Medical Xpress)—ImmuNext, founded by scientists at King's College London, has announced a research and drug development agreement with Janssen Biotech Inc to develop a new cancer drug to trigger the body's own immune system to fight the disease.

The new therapy will be based on a discovery made by scientists at the MRC Centre for Transplantation at King's and Dartmouth Medical School (US), who identified a novel molecule in the immune system called VISTA, thought to be key to unlocking the body's own cancer-fighting response.

The NIHR Biomedical Research Centre at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and King's College London provided support to the project carried out at King's, which uncovered the role of VISTA.

VISTA naturally suppresses the immune system's response to [cancer cells](#) and limits a person's ability to kick-start the response needed to attack the disease. Drugs that block the function of VISTA have proven in pre-clinical models to enhance cancer immunity and reduce [tumor growth](#). It is anticipated that blocking VISTA in [cancer patients](#) will allow the body to trigger a protective immune response to cancer with the ultimate goal of [remission](#).

While there are already drugs in early development to unlock the body's own immune system to attack cancer cells, it is thought that the inhibition of VISTA has the potential to treat a much broader range of solid and liquid cancers.

ImmuNext will grant Janssen a worldwide exclusive license to develop and commercialise therapies that suppress VISTA.

Professor Randolph Noelle, MRC Centre for Transplantation at King's and Chief Scientific Officer at ImmuNext, said: 'This is an extremely exciting development in the fight against cancer. We have discovered a new [target](#) that could allow us to unleash a patient's own immune response to attack and eradicate the disease.

'We are delighted to be working with Janssen to turn this discovery into real treatments for cancer patients.

'Immunotherapy has taken centre stage in the cure for cancer, and VISTA represents the newest, and one of the most exciting novel targets in this approach.'

Provided by King's College London

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