

Ludwig Cancer Research and CRI collaborate on VentiRx's investigational immunotherapy

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The nonprofits Ludwig Cancer Research (Ludwig) and the Cancer Research Institute (CRI) announced today an agreement with VentiRx Pharmaceuticals Inc., a clinical stage biopharmaceutical company, to conduct a clinical trial with motolimod (VTX-2337) combined with other immunotherapy agents available to Ludwig and CRI through other industry partnerships. VentiRx will provide motolimod, the company's lead immuno-oncology agent, for the study, which will be conducted by Ludwig and CRI through their jointly coordinated CVC Trials Network.

"Ludwig's mission is to conduct basic, applied and clinical research to support the swift development of game-changing cancer therapies," said Jonathan Skipper, PhD, Ludwig's executive director of technology development. "Motolimod holds considerable promise as a cancer drug, particularly as a component of combination immunotherapies. We look forward to working with VentiRx to assess its potential in [clinical trials](#), as part of our effort to bring powerful new immunotherapies as quickly as possible to cancer patients."

Immuno-oncology, as the name implies, recruits the [immune system](#) into the battle against cancer, either by boosting its existing but latent anti-tumor responses or honing its recognition of malignant cells. Several recent studies have shown that such therapies, especially when used in combination, can induce potent and durable control of advanced cancers, in some cases resulting in lasting remissions.

"Our collaboration with VentiRx is part of a broader programmatic effort to partner with top biotech and pharmaceutical companies to develop novel combinations of treatments that may work better together than each would alone," said Adam Kolom, managing director of CRI's venture fund. "By making it possible for leading academic oncologists to bring together the most promising and mechanistically distinct drugs from different companies, we are able to deliver powerful new treatments to cancer patients today while helping the field unlock immunotherapy's full potential more quickly."

Motolimod specifically binds and activates toll-like receptor-8 (TLR-8). TLR8 is found inside dendritic cells, which are patrolling immune cells that instigate, direct and fuel the [immune response](#) against infectious agents and malignant cells. When activated by motolimod, TLR-8 prompts [dendritic cells](#) within tumors to secrete factors that fuel a cascade of immune responses. This draws the innate immune system's natural killer (NK) cells into the fray, promotes the antibody-mediated destruction of [malignant cells](#) and, ultimately, supports the activation of T cells that specifically target the [cancer](#).

"We are very excited to collaborate with Ludwig and CRI and benefit from their significant expertise in enabling this important clinical trial," said Robert Hershberg, MD, PhD, President and CEO at VentiRx.

"Previous studies have shown that when motolimod (VTX-2337) is given in combination with certain chemotherapies, it enhances immune responses within the tumor microenvironment. We are confident that, as a potent activator of the [innate immune response](#), motolimod will prove even more effective as a component of combination [immunotherapy](#)."

Provided by Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research

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