



NEWS RELEASE

Immediate protection for emergency workers and front line care-givers against H1N1 influenza A (swine flu) – an initiative launched by the International Consortium on Anti-Virals (ICAV)

For immediate release
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Peterborough, ON, Canada - An initiative aimed at providing immediate protection against the current outbreak of H1N1 influenza A for emergency workers and front line care-givers was announced today by the International Consortium on Anti-Virals (ICAV), a not-for-profit drug discovery and development company with 250 participants from 25 countries.

A single injection of a “truly-human” monoclonal antibody (tHumAb), currently being generated by ICAV, would provide immediate protection for at least a month. In contrast, vaccines can take weeks after administration to provide protection. “tHumAbs will provide a valuable addition to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)’s therapeutic arsenal. The complete spectrum of therapeutic and prophylactic options includes anti-virals (such as Tamiflu), vaccines and tHumAbs,” said ICAV’s CEO, Dr. Jeremy Carver.

Outside Mexico, most people who have been infected by the current H1N1 virus are only experiencing mild symptoms. There is concern, however, that the virus could return in the next flu season in a much more virulent form and that it also could be resistant to Tamiflu, the current recommended treatment option.

Two years ago, as part of its pandemic preparedness plan, PHAC funded ICAV to review possible additional therapeutic approaches beyond Tamiflu. The Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation followed with an investment to assist in developing truly-human monoclonal antibodies (the tHumAb technology). These farsighted decisions are about to pay off.

ICAV participants, notably Professors James Rini at the University of Toronto and John Schrader at the University of British Columbia, are preparing tHumAbs to protect front line workers against possible infection. They are using specimens from Ontario collected through Dr. Vanessa Allen of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) and reagents supplied by the US Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

“I am very excited about this collaboration. We learned from SARS that we need to increase the tools available to protect health care workers.” said Dr. Don Low, Medical Director, Public Health Laboratory of OAHPP.

The US CDC has launched a similar initiative to produce human monoclonal antibodies against the H1N1 virus. “We feel, however, it is essential that we develop our own Canadian capabilities

so we can protect Canadian workers and share our technology with low and middle income countries. This is in keeping with the ICAV philosophy and ICAV has assembled an outstanding team from all across Canada to meet this goal,” said Dr. Michel Chrétien, ICAV’s Co-Founder responsible for International Partnerships.

ICAV’s manufacturing partner QSV Biologics Ltd (Edmonton) – Canada’s only Health Canada approved dedicated contract manufacturing organization (CMO) for the production of clinical & commercial grade biologics - is poised to scale up production of the tHumAb once the academic team has identified it. It is anticipated that manufacturing scale-up will commence in ten or so weeks.

If the H1N1 virus reappears with increased virulence and Tamiflu-resistance in the Fall, the tHumAb therapeutic platform will be an essential part of the response. By developing and perfecting the manufacturing of tHumAbs against the current virus, ICAV will be in a better position to rapidly produce the next iteration tHumAb for the anticipated Fall outbreak.

According to Dr. Nabil Seidah, one of the first scientists to join the Consortium, “ICAV is the most extensive scientific network that I am aware of with its 250 members from 25 countries”.

About ICAV:

ICAV, headquartered at Trent University in Peterborough, is an institutional innovation - a not-for-profit drug development and discovery company - dedicated to the discovery and development of anti-viral therapies for neglected and emerging diseases. Through the international collaboration of scientists, government and industry, ICAV’s goal is to deliver at least one novel drug to market every five years that is affordable, effective, and globally accessible to all patients in need. ICAV:

- fills the gap between academic research and clinical development
- accelerates development of drugs for neglected and emerging viral diseases
- ensures global access to novel therapies at affordable prices

About Trent University:

One of Canada's top universities, Trent University is renowned for striking a unique balance between outstanding teaching and leading-edge research. The University is consistently recognized nationally for faculty who maintain a high level of innovative research activity and a deep commitment to the individual student. Distinguished by excellence in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences and increasingly popular professional and graduate programs, Trent is dedicated to providing its students with an exceptional world view, producing graduates who are ready to succeed and make a difference in the world.

For more information please contact:

Christine Hodge.
christine.hodge@icav-citav.ca
(705) 748-1011 x7008
(416) 220-8631 (cell)

Website: www.icav-citav.ca