

## **Immuno Cure secured maximum subsidy from HKSTP**

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### *Significant funding support for HIV Vaccine Clinical Trial*

(17 October 2022, Hong Kong) – **Immuno Cure BioTech**, a clinical stage biotechnology group based in the Hong Kong Science Park specialising in DNA vaccines and immunotherapies, announced today that Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (“**HKSTP**”) has awarded maximum amount of HK\$8 million matching funding to Immuno Cure under the Clinical Translational Catalyst program (“**CTC Program**”) for conducting the Phase 1 Clinical Trial of ICVAX, a therapeutic vaccine against HIV/AIDS.

The overarching aim of the CTC Program offered by HKSTP Institute for Translational Research (“**ITR**”) is to provide a platform to transform Hong Kong and Greater Bay Area to become the go-to destination for translational medicine in the region. Under this program, funding support will be provided to biomedical companies of HKSTP to bring innovative, life-changing therapies and technologies to patients.

The CTC Program funding of HK\$8 million will be drawn down by Immuno Cure in the next 27 months in various tranches according to the progress of the clinical trial of ICVAX. Immuno Cure previously received the University-Industry Collaboration Programme and Cash Rebate Scheme funding of some HK\$8.4 million from the Government’s Innovation and Technology Fund (“**ITF**”) for the research and development of ICVAX since early 2018. As a collaborator, the AIDS Institute of The Hong Kong University has subsequently received a total amount of HK\$ 47 million from Government’s Research Grants Council Theme-based Research Scheme for basic and translational research on “Potentiating Host Immunity for HIV-1 Functional Cure”.

ICVAX is a therapeutic HIV DNA vaccine developed using the patented PD-1-Enhanced DNA Vaccine platform, aiming to induce cross-reactive viral-specific T cells to achieve functional cure in HIV. This vaccine is developed by Immuno Cure in collaboration with HKU AIDS Institute. Immuno Cure has successfully obtained the approval of Investigational New Drug application of ICVAX by the National Medical Products Administration in the Mainland. Together with the approval granted by the

ethics committee of The Third People's Hospital of Shenzhen, Immuno Cure is initiating a First-in-Human Phase 1 clinical trial of ICVAX in the hospital.

The trial is designed as a randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled, dose-escalation study to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of ICVAX in stable HIV/AIDS patients under antiretroviral therapy. Overall, the study will take approximately 18-24 months to complete. By the end of the study, an optimal vaccine dosage that is both safe and immunogenic in stable HIV patients will be identified for subsequent clinical trials in the future. Immuno Cure is currently working closely with all partners involved to propel the study forward.

In addition to ICVAX, Immuno Cure currently has another PD-1-Enhanced DNA vaccine for prevention of COVID-19, ICCOV, in preparation for advancement to Phase 2 clinical trial.

**Dr JIN Xia, CEO of Immuno Cure** said, "Initiation of this phase 1 clinical trial is supported by promising preclinical study results and safety evaluation that demonstrated the antiviral activity of this potential first-in-class therapeutic vaccine designed and developed specifically against HIV. Our novel PD-1-Enhanced DNA vaccine platform is ready for first-in-human trial and we are very pleased to be in the forefront of the field. We are honoured to receive this funding support from HKSTP and are optimistic that our long-term collaboration with HKU AIDS Institute will bear fruit."

**Professor CHEN Zhiwei, Director of AIDS Institute at the University of Hong Kong and the Principal Scientific Advisor of Immuno Cure** said, "HIV has been a major public health challenge for more than four decades. Our vaccine platform has demonstrated safety and potent efficacy in non-human primates. I hope the HKSTP support and private funding from Immuno Cure together with research grant from the Government will help us to assess whether the excellent preclinical data could be translated into human and lay solid foundation for drug development towards functional cure of HIV patients."

**Dr Percy CHENG, Chairman of Immuno Cure** concludes, “We are privileged to be partnering with HKU AIDS Institute and HKSTP ITR and grateful for this CTC Program funding in support of our translational process. We also treasure the funding support from ITF since 2018 during the early stage of the development of ICVAX. We would also like to express our special thanks to our volunteers in advance for their selfless contributions, without whom we would not be able to kick off this exciting clinical trial.”

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### **Immuno Cure BioTech**

Immuno Cure BioTech is a clinical stage biotechnology group based in the Hong Kong Science Park, focusing on research and development of vaccines and immunotherapies for cancers, inflammatory and infectious diseases based on its patented PD-1-Enhanced DNA vaccine and Anti-Δ42-PD1 Blocking Antibody technology platforms.

*To learn more about Immuno Cure BioTech, please visit <https://www.immunocure.hk/en/>*

### **Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation**

Comprising Science Park, InnoCentre and Industrial Estates, Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP) is a statutory body dedicated to building a vibrant innovation and technology ecosystem to connect stakeholders, nurture technology talents, facilitate collaboration, and catalyse innovations to deliver social and economic benefits to Hong Kong and the region.

Established in May 2001, HKSTP has been driving the development of Hong Kong into a regional hub for innovation and growth in several focused clusters including Electronics, Information Communications Technology, Green Technology, Biomedical Technology, Materials and Precision Engineering. HKSTP enables science and technology companies to nurture ideas, innovate and grow, supported by its R&D facilities, infrastructure, and market-led laboratories and technical centres with professional support services. HKSTP also offers value added services and comprehensive incubation programmes for technology start-ups to accelerate their growth.

Technology businesses benefit from the specialised services and infrastructure provided at Science Park for applied research and product development; enterprises can find creative design support at InnoCentre; while skill-intensive businesses are served by the three industrial estates at Tai Po, Tseung Kwan O and Yuen Long.

*To learn more about Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, please visit*

*<http://www.hkstp.org>*

### **AIDS Institute, HKUMed**

The AIDS Institute of the University of Hong Kong was established in November 2007 to take HKU in a new strategic direction in fighting this global epidemic and help to make it a leader in the region in AIDS research, education and prevention. Scientists at the AIDS Institute are fully committed to conducting basic and applied research that facilitates the understanding of AIDS pathogenesis and the development of effective AIDS vaccines. Activities in the Institute include: basic research to examine the virological and immunological mechanisms underlying HIV pathogenesis; new concept, design, preparation and laboratory testing of vaccine candidates for HIV and other infectious diseases; and monitoring the evolution of HIV epidemic in Hong Kong and in the region.

*To learn more about AIDS Institute of the University of Hong Kong, please visit*

*<https://www.med.hku.hk/aidsinst/>*

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