

Press Release

For Immediate Release

HKU AIDS Institute & Immuno Cure's Collaborative Therapeutic HIV Vaccine Research Project secured HK\$66.7m TRS funding from Research Grant Council

Research Funding for Sustained cART-free HIV-1 Control by Immunotherapeutic Interventions

[Hong Kong, July 18, 2024] — Immuno Cure BioTech (“**Immuno Cure**”) is pleased to announce today that a collaborative research entitled “Sustained cART-free HIV-1 Control by Immunotherapeutic Interventions” (“**Project**”) led by Prof. Zhiwei Chen of The University of Hong Kong (“**HKU**”) on our therapeutic HIV vaccine (“**ICVAX**”) has been awarded HK\$66.7 million of funding under the Theme-based Research Scheme (“**TRS**”) of the Research Grants Council (“**RGC**”) for a second 5-year term.

HIV/AIDS are a global health concern, especially significant in Hong Kong. Based on Centre for Health Protection’s record, a cumulative total of 12,143 cases of HIV infection and 2,507 cases of AIDS are found in Hong Kong, which have been steadily increasing over the years. The current combination antiretroviral therapy (“**cART**”) target suppressing viral reproduction while this project will further investigate the effect of using our PD-1-enhanced DNA vaccine technologies on immunogenicity.

The Project is led by Professor Zhiwei Chen, Director of the AIDS Institute and Chair Professor of the Department of Microbiology, School of Clinical Medicine, LKS Faculty of Medicine of HKU, and the Principal Scientific Advisor of Immuno Cure. The research will be performed in collaboration with Immuno Cure, Chinese University of Hong Kong Phase 1 Clinical Trial Centre, The Third People’s Hospital of Shenzhen, and other hospitals in the Mainland where the collaborative team of researchers will investigate and determine the mechanism of PD-1-based DNA vaccine-mediated 7-year cART-free virologic control in SHIV-infected rhesus monkeys; the impact of PD-1-base DNA vaccine on cART-treated people living with HIV-1 (“**PLWH**”); and the sustained cART-free HIV-1 control using analytical treatment interruption (“**ATI**”) and combinational immunotherapy.

Immuno Cure will contribute to the manufacturing of ICVAX and the design and management of the clinical trials with our aim to determine the ATI amongst the PLWH of ICVAX Phase 1 Trial; to optimise the immunogenicity of ICVAX by conducting a multi-centre Phase 2 Trial; and to determine the immunotherapeutic efficacy by combining ICVAX with other complementary strategies. This Project will strengthen Hong Kong Research Consortium on HIV/AIDS in collaboration with international experts and scientific advisors, and also reveal mechanisms underlying a promising “Made in Hong Kong” immunotherapy in clinical trials. It will ultimately contribute to the understanding of long-term viral control and potential alternative treatment strategies for HIV-1 without cART treatment in future.

Prof. Zhiwei CHEN, Director of AIDS Institute of HKU and the Principal Scientific Advisor of Immuno Cure, said “Preliminary Phase 1 Trial data demonstrated that the HKU patented PD-1-enhanced DNA vaccine ICVAX has shown convincing safety and immunogenicity profiles in PLWH. Our team members are very grateful that this TRS grant will allow us to expand our translational research to benefit more and more PLWH.”

Dr. Xia JIN, CEO of Immuno Cure & Co-PI of the Project, said, “We are excited to be a key member of the collaborative research team led by Prof. Chen, with whom we have many years of close working relationship. This TRS-funded research will enhance our understanding of the mechanisms of the

immune protection and enable us to further investigate the potential of ICVAX towards functional cure of HIV/AIDS.”

Dr. Percy CHENG, Chairman of Immuno Cure, concluded, “Immuno Cure is delighted to have earned RGC’s support and recognition of our ICVAX research which is of strategic importance to Hong Kong’s long-term development. This milestone allows us to carry out academic collaborative research with HKU’s AIDS Institute and other top ranked universities in Hong Kong and the Mainland for the advancement of our combat against HIV/AIDS. We are also grateful for the involvement of all the global expert advisors organised by Prof. Chen.”

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About Immuno Cure

Immuno Cure is a clinical stage biotechnology group based in the Hong Kong Science Park, focusing on research and development of immunotherapies for cancers, inflammatory and infectious diseases based on its patented PD-1-enhanced DNA vaccine and Anti-Δ42PD1 Antibody platforms; with two DNA vaccine candidates currently in clinical trials.

To learn more about Immuno Cure, please visit: www.immunocure.hk

About The University of Hong Kong and AIDS Institute of HKUMed

The University of Hong Kong (HKU), founded in 1911, is the first and oldest institution of higher learning in Hong Kong. HKU has an established worldwide reputation for being a research-led comprehensive university. The AIDS Institute of HKU 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. Furtherance to the Hong Kong Theme-based Research Scheme entitled “Potentiating Host Immunity for HIV-1 Functional Cure”, the institute is currently leading the second 5-year term research entitled “Sustained cART-free HIV-1 Control by Immunotherapeutic Interventions”.

To learn more about HKU and AIDS Institute of HKU, please visit <https://www.hku.hk> and <https://www.med.hku.hk/aidsinst>

About Research Grant Council and Theme-based Research Scheme

To learn more about RGC, please visit: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/index.html>

To learn more about TRS, please visit: https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/trs/

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