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Hapten Sciences to Begin Clinical Trials for Poison Ivy Vaccine

Compound based on UM, EISohly Laboratories research could prevent itchy rash from forming

NOVEMBER 20, 2015 BY **STAFF REPORT**



Poison ivy

MEMPHIS, Tenn. and OXFORD, Miss. – Hapten Sciences Inc., a privately held biotechnology company, will soon conduct a Phase I clinical trial of its lead product candidate, a compound based on research conducted at the University of Mississippi and EISohly Laboratories that could prevent contact dermatitis due to exposure to poison ivy, oak and sumac.

The company obtained a worldwide, exclusive license for the technology from UM, submitted an Investigational New Drug application to the U.S. Food

and Drug Administration and is able to initiate dosing of the compound, PDC-APB, in healthy volunteers.

“Since company inception, Hapten Sciences has pursued an aggressive and efficient development timeline,” said Raymond J. Hage Jr., Hapten Sciences chief executive officer. “We are enthusiastic that we are able to begin clinical development of a first-in-class compound that can potentially prevent contact dermatitis, associated medical treatments and lost time at work.”

Mahmoud EISohly, research professor in the **UM School of Pharmacy’s** Research Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences and professor of pharmaceuticals, Khalid Ashfaq, principal research scientist II at the School of Pharmacy, and Waseem Gul, associate director of research at EISohly Laboratories, initially developed the technology and provided support during preclinical development.

“This is a very exciting development in the potential prevention of a very serious allergic reaction,” EISohly said. “My colleagues and I are thrilled to be a part of this groundbreaking clinical trial.”

The trial will be a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of single ascending doses and is intended to determine the safety and tolerability of PDC-APB. Hapten Sciences is also planning a multiple ascending dose study in individuals who are sensitive to poison ivy. The studies are slated for 2016.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, allergic contact dermatitis is the single most common plant dermatitis in North America. Individuals at greatest risk for significant morbidity include those who face significant job related exposure (e.g., foresters, firefighters and farmers) and children who often become sensitized in early childhood.

“The studies will provide key data on safety and tolerability after one and multiple doses,” Hage said. “In addition, the company will collect information on biological activity in preventing contact dermatitis. We would like to thank Mahmoud EISohly, his colleagues at UM and the EISohly Laboratories team for their work.”

Hapten Sciences is a privately held biotechnology company based in Memphis, Tennessee, that is pioneering a unique approach to the prevention of contact dermatitis using a small-molecule vaccine known as a hapten. Hapten Sciences is also reviewing other applications related to this approach for other dermatology conditions. Hapten’s lead investor is MB Venture Partners.

EISohly Laboratories Inc. is a small business Mississippi corporation founded in 1985 and specializes in analytical and product development activities with 21 employees.

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