

Advancing research in immuno-oncology with Potenza Therapeutics

Oct 31, 2017



When it comes to innovation in cancer treatment, Astellas' oncology therapeutic area has a pioneering partner in Potenza Therapeutics, a privately held biotech company headquartered in Cambridge, Mass.

Founded in 2014, Potenza specializes in immuno-oncology (I/O) research and treatment development. Since 2015, it has collaborated with Astellas' largest therapeutic area to develop novel antibodies for I/O therapy. Potenza leads

the discovery work while Astellas leads clinical development, establishing a close collaboration across all aspects of the program.

"The Potenza collaboration was established through Astellas Innovation Management* and represents our flexibility and commitment to creating alliances that meet the needs of our partners, in order to create value for patients," said Steven Benner, Senior Vice President and Therapeutic Area Head, Oncology. "We work very closely with our colleagues at Potenza and have been very impressed by their scientific expertise and productivity."

Immuno-oncology is the use of the body's own immune system to fight cancer. The immune system is designed to distinguish between normal cells and those it believes don't belong, allowing it to attack invaders but leave normal cells alone. As tumors develop, cancerous cells will adapt to escape the immune system's ability to attack them – allowing them to grow and spread. I/O research and therapies aim to work with the immune system to produce immune responses to these cancer cells, so that the root of the cancer treatment is the body itself.

I/O is an area of focus for Astellas' future research and development, as it provides a significant opportunity to positively impact the lives of patients with cancer.

"We expect that I/O treatments will ultimately be used in combination to produce the best clinical outcomes," said Benner. "The Potenza collaboration will produce a pipeline of novel I/O antibodies that we will be able to develop in combination, both with each other and with our pipeline compounds. This ability to control the components of I/O treatment regimens is an aspect of great importance to Astellas and hopefully, in the future, for patients with cancer."

**The Astellas Innovation Management's mission is to intake early stage external innovation into Astellas R&D.*