Press Cutting

Client: Hutchison China Meditech

Publication: Scrip

Date: 9 January 2009

Clinical setback in lung cancer for key Chi-Med project

By Ian Haydock

Published Online: 09/01/2009

Hutchison China MediTech (Chi-Med) has put the clinical development of one of its most advanced pipeline projects on hold after an interim analysis of data from a Chinese Phase II study showed it to have missed an efficacy endpoint.

The proof-of-concept trial was comparing the oral therapy, HMPL-002, in combination with standard first-line chemoradiotherapy versus standard chemoradiotherapy alone, in patients with inoperable stage III A/B non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). The traditional medicine-derived molecule acts as a sensitiser by reducing hypoxia in malignant cells, increasing their susceptibility to such treatment.

The treatment phase of the study, conducted through Chi-Med's wholly owned Chinese subsidiary Hutchison MediPharma, was completed last year. An early analysis showed that the tumour objective response rate in 88 patients with locally advanced disease was 73% in the HMPL-002 group, little different to the 70% in the control group.

In terms of this measure of efficacy, "it is clear that the initial analysis…showed no conclusive advantage" for HMPL-002, the AIM-listed firm said. Data on other endpoints including progression-free survival, one- and three-year median survival time and time to progression are not yet available.

The one-year follow-up on the study is due for completion in the first quarter, and Chi-Med said it would review the future of the compound once the median survival data become available. HMPL-002 is also in a US Phase I study in locally advanced head and neck cancer patients undergoing cisplatin chemoradiotherapy.

In the meantime, the company said the hold decision would allow it to concentrate resources on other Phase II projects, in particular the potential ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease therapy, HMPL-004.