New Research Collaboration Between BioXcel Therapeutics and Nektar to Evaluate BXCL701 in Combination with NKTR-214 in Multiple Oncology Indications

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BRANFORD, Conn., Nov. 13, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- BioXcel Therapeutics (“BTI”), a biopharmaceutical company committed to developing novel drugs targeting immuno-oncology and neurological and psychiatric diseases, announced today that Nektar Therapeutics and BTI have entered into a research collaboration to explore the novel combination of Nektar’s NKTR-214, a CD122-biased agonist, and BTI’s BXCL701, a small molecule immune-modulator and DPP 8/9 and FAP inhibitor, for the treatment of multiple oncology indications.

NKTR-214 is an investigational immuno-stimulatory therapy designed to expand specific cancer-fighting CD8+ effector T cells and natural killer cells directly in the tumor micro-environment and increase expression of PD-1 on these immune cells. NKTR-214 targets CD122 specific receptors found on the surface of these cancer-fighting immune cells in order to stimulate their proliferation. BXCL701 is an inhibitor of dipeptidyl peptidases (DPPs) 8 and 9 and fibroblast activation protein (FAP) in immune cells and induces expression of a wide range of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines.

The goal of this collaboration is to leverage the complementary mechanisms of NKTR-214 and BXCL701 to boost the body’s own immune system and overcome local immunosuppressive mechanisms in the tumor microenvironment. The collaborative research studies will evaluate the potential of the therapies in preclinical mouse models of pancreatic and prostate cancer.

“Combination immunotherapy represents a potentially groundbreaking innovation in cancer treatment. We are hopeful that experimental research studies of these two agents will translate into an immune mediated anti-cancer benefit,” said Dr. Vince O’Neill, Chief Medical Officer of BioXcel Therapeutics. “The complementary mechanisms of BXCL701 and NKTR-214 may stimulate both innate and acquired immune responses while inhibiting the immuno-suppressive effect of the tumor microenvironment, representing a significant potential opportunity to develop a novel therapy to fight cancer.”

“We’re pleased to be collaborating with BTI, to understand the potential of NKTR-214 with BXCL701 as a combination therapy. The preclinical studies outlined in this collaboration target difficult to treat tumors and allow us to evaluate efficacy and the underlying immunological mechanism of the combination,” said Jonathan Zalevesky, Senior Vice President, Biology & Preclinical Development of Nektar Therapeutics. “The results obtained from these collaborative studies may inform future rational combination therapies that could be effectively translated into new treatment options for cancer patients.”

About Nektar:
Nektar Therapeutics is a research-based development stage biopharmaceutical company whose mission is to discover and develop innovative medicines to address the unmet medical needs of patients. Our R&D pipeline of new investigational medicines includes treatments for cancer, auto-immune disease and chronic pain. We leverage Nektar's proprietary and proven chemistry platform in the discovery and design of our new therapeutic candidates. Nektar is headquartered in San Francisco, California, with additional operations in Huntsville, Alabama and Hyderabad, India. Further information about the company and its drug development programs and capabilities may be found online at http://www.nektar.com.

About BioXcel Therapeutics, Inc. (BTI):
BioXcel Therapeutics, Inc. is a clinical stage biopharmaceutical company focused on drug development that utilizes novel artificial intelligence to identify the next wave of medicines across neuroscience and immuno-oncology. The company’s drug re-innovation approach leverages existing approved drugs and/or clinically validated product candidates together with big data and proprietary machine learning algorithms to identify new therapeutic indices. The company’s two most advanced clinical development programs are BXCL501, a sublingual thin film formulation designed for acute treatment of agitation resulting from neurological and psychiatric disorders, and BXCL701, an immuno-oncology agent designed for treatment of a rare form of prostate cancer and for treatment of pancreatic cancer. For more information, please visit www.bioxceltherapeutics.com.

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