

SINGAPORE

## Made-in-Singapore cancer drug advances to clinical trials on humans

The drug, ETC-159, was developed in a collaboration between A\*STAR and Duke-NUS, and is expected to target a range of cancers, including colorectal, ovarian and pancreatic cancers.

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PHOTOS



Prof David Virshup (centre, in blazer) and the research team. (Photo: A\*STAR, Duke-NUS)

CAPTION



SINGAPORE: A made-in-Singapore cancer drug is touted to be the first publicly-funded drug candidate discovered and developed in Singapore to make it to trials on humans.

In a statement on Thursday (Jul 16), The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A\*STAR) and Duke-National University of Singapore Graduate Medical School (Duke-NUS), announced the start of the Phase I clinical trial of novel cancer drug candidate, ETC-159.

The Phase I clinical trial is meant to evaluate the safety and tolerability of ETC-159 in advanced solid tumours of up to 58 patients, and the first patient was dosed on Jun 18. The first two sites for the trial are the National Cancer Centre Singapore and the National University Hospital, and sites in the US will be added as the trial progresses.

The drug is expected to target a range of cancers, including colorectal, ovarian and pancreatic cancers. These cancers are linked to a group of cell signalling pathways known as Wnt signalling, which have been identified to promote cancer growth and spread, said the agencies. ETC-159 acts as an inhibitor of these pathways.

"This drug candidate therefore offers a promising novel and targeted cancer therapy that could shape future cancer therapeutic strategies," said A\*STAR and Duke-NUS.

ETC-159 was discovered and developed through a collaboration between A\*STAR's Experimental Therapeutics Centre (ETC), Drug Discovery and Development (D3) unit and Duke-NUS since 2009. It was based on the discovery work of Prof David Virshup from Duke-NUS.

Prof David Virshup, inaugural Director of the Programme in Cancer and Stem Cell Biology at Duke-NUS, said: "As the drug candidate provides a targeted cancer therapy, it could potentially minimise side effects and make cancer treatments more bearable for cancer patients."

He added: "It is fitting that Singaporeans might be the first to benefit from this Singapore-developed drug."

- CNA/av