Neoleukin Therapeutics Announces Clinical Collaboration with Merck to Evaluate NL-201 in Combination with KEYTRUDA® (pembrolizumab)

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- NL-201 plus pembrolizumab to be evaluated in advanced solid tumor patients -
- Combination testing anticipated to begin in 2022 -

SEATTLE, Jan. 10, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Neoleukin Therapeutics, Inc., “Neoleukin” (NASDAQ:NLTX), a biopharmaceutical company utilizing sophisticated computational methods to design de novo protein therapeutics, today announced a clinical trial collaboration and supply agreement with Merck (known as MSD outside the United States and Canada). The agreement will allow for the evaluation of safety and efficacy of Neoleukin’s NL-201, a de novo protein designed to mimic the therapeutic activity of natural cytokines IL-2 and IL-15, in combination with Merck’s anti-PD-1 therapy KEYTRUDA® (pembrolizumab) in an ongoing Phase 1 trial.

Neoleukin will evaluate NL-201 plus pembrolizumab as part of the company’s ongoing Phase 1 trial in patients with advanced, relapsed or refractory solid tumors. Up to 132 patients will be enrolled in the combination arm of the study. The trial is assessing safety, pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics, immunogenicity, and antitumor activity.

“Neoleukin is excited to collaborate with Merck, one of the world’s leading immuno-oncology companies,” said Priti Patel, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Neoleukin. “Our prior preclinical studies demonstrated that the combination of NL-201 and an anti-PD-1 antibody was well-tolerated and showed promising antitumor activity compared to either drug alone as monotherapy. We see this combination of drugs as having exciting potential to benefit patients with relapsed or refractory solid tumors in the future. This combination arm, alongside the NL-201 monotherapy arm of the NL-201-101 study, is a key component of our evolving NL-201 program.”

KEYTRUDA® is a registered trademark of Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp., a subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, NJ, USA.

About NL-201
NL-201 is a de novo agonist of the IL-2 and IL-15 receptors, designed to expand cancer-fighting CD8 T cells and natural killer (NK) cells without any bias toward cells expressing the alpha receptor subunit (CD25). Previously presented preclinical data has demonstrated the ability of NL-201 to stimulate and expand CD8+ and NK cells at low doses with minimal impact on immunosuppressive regulatory T cells. Furthermore, NL-201 has demonstrated both monotherapy and combination activity across a wide range of preclinical syngeneic tumor models.

About Neoleukin Therapeutics, Inc.

Neoleukin is a biopharmaceutical company creating next generation immunotherapies for cancer, inflammation and autoimmunity using de novo protein design technology. Neoleukin uses sophisticated computational methods to design proteins that demonstrate specific pharmaceutical properties that provide potentially superior therapeutic benefit over native proteins. Neoleukin’s lead product candidate, NL-201, is a combined IL-2 and IL-15 agonist designed to improve tolerability and activity by eliminating the alpha receptor binding interface. For more information, please visit the Neoleukin website: www.neoleukin.com.

Safe Harbor / Forward-Looking Statements

This press release contains "forward-looking" statements within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, including, but not limited to, statements regarding the therapeutic properties and potential of the company’s de novo protein design technology, the results of the clinical trial for NL-201, and planned clinical and development activities and timelines. Forward-looking statements can be identified by words such as: "anticipate," "intend," "plan," "goal," "seek," "believe," "project," "estimate," "expect," "strategy," "future," "likely," "may," "should," "will" and similar references to future periods. These statements are subject to numerous risks and uncertainties, including risks and uncertainties related to the company’s cash forecasts, the company’s ability to advance its product candidates, the receipt and timing of potential regulatory submissions, designations, approvals and commercialization of product candidates, the timing and results of preclinical and clinical trials, the timing of announcements and updates relating to the company’s clinical trials and related data market conditions and further impacts of COVID-19, that could cause actual results to differ materially from what Neoleukin expects. Further information on potential risk factors that could affect Neoleukin’s business and its financial results are detailed under the heading “Risk Factors” in documents the company files from time to time with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and other reports as filed with the SEC. Neoleukin undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether written or oral, that may be made from time to time, whether as a result of new information, future developments or otherwise.

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