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BIOTECH MAP REFRESH



Italian Gene Therapy Biotech aims high by Collaborating with US Giant Amgen

ITALY RESEARCH

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Genenta Science and Amgen have teamed up to develop gene therapies for cancer. The Italian biotech from Milan raised €10M in series A funding last year and is already getting ready for clinical trials.



Genenta is developing a **gene therapy platform** for **haematopoietic stem cells** and wants to bring it to the clinic. Together with the **San Raffaele Hospital and Scientific Institute in Milan**, it aims to develop gene therapies with low toxicity that target specific tumors. In partnering with Amgen, the Italians expect to benefit from its expertise in oncology and the development of cutting-edge technologies.

The most common problem of antitumoral drug candidates is that they present **high toxicity** levels. However, Genenta has developed a method of expressing the desired drug in specific tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes only when they're in the tumor microenvironment. Their gene therapy uses **lentivirus vectors** to reprogram haematopoietic progenitor cells taken from the own patient's bone marrow. Genenta has already started preparing for clinical trials by partnering with **MolMed**: the company will have the exclusive manufacturing right of the product during the trials.

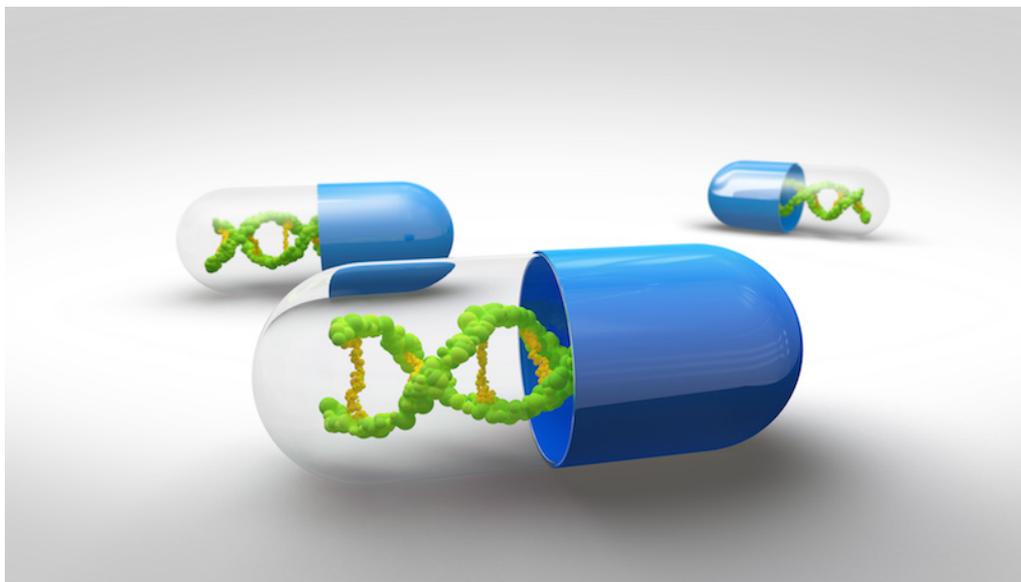


Figure 1. Gene Therapy

Gene therapy is on the rise, and the first therapies are already out there. In May this year, **GSK** got FDA approval for **Strimvelis**, a gene therapy for a rare disease in children. In 2012, UniQure launched **Glybera**, a therapy for lipoprotein lipase deficiency.

The popularity of gene therapy comes from its promise to cure a disease for life with a one-time treatment. Sweet deal, right? However, this makes it difficult for the companies to get revenue without making the treatments **incredibly expensive**. Glybera is a perfect example. Let's hope that new treatments deal with this issue more effectively in the future.

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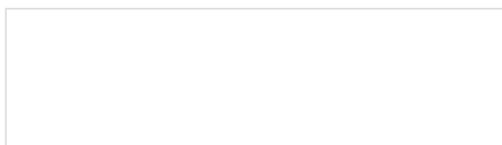
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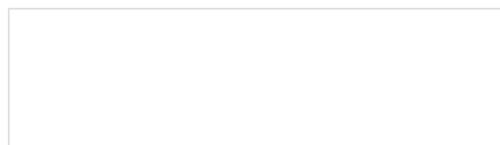
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