

Kenta Biotech is in discussions with potential partners for its lead programme KBPA, said CEO Violetta Georgescu-Kyburz. The private Swiss biotech company would like to strike a deal in 2009, she said.

KBPA101, a fully human monoclonal antibody, is currently in a Phase II pilot study for the treatment of hospital-acquired *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infections. Top-line results are not due until mid-2009, but Georgescu-Kyburz was optimistic that an interim analysis scheduled for early 2009 could be sufficient basis for a licensing deal. She added that the company had sufficient funds to complete the Phase II program independently, if necessary.

Georgescu-Kyburz said an ideal partner would be a global company with a strong focus on hospital care and a sales force with good access to intensive care specialists.

The current Phase II pilot study is primarily concerned with safety and tolerability, with clinical benefits as secondary endpoints. Assuming positive data, it will be followed by a Phase II B proof of concept study.

*P. aeruginosa*, which accounts for about 10% of hospital-acquired infections, is an opportunistic pathogen of immunocompromised patients, such as those on immunosuppressive cancer treatment and those with burns. The bacterium is also a common cause of pneumonia in intensive care patients on mechanical ventilation, and has an attributable mortality rate of about 40%. Furthermore, Kenta Biotech states that the proportion of strains resistant to ceftazidime, a third generation cephalosporin, increased from 12% in 1995 to 29% in 2001.

In addition to KBPA101, Kenta Biotech has three similar antibodies due to enter Phase I clinical studies in 2010 which target three of the most common serotypes of *P. aeruginosa*. Georgescu-Kyburz explained that the relative prevalence of each serotype varies geographically – for example, the strain targeted by KBPA101 accounts for roughly 99% of *P. aeruginosa* in Japan, 30-35% in the US, and virtually 0% in Switzerland - but that the four targeted serotypes together cover about 80% of total *P. aeruginosa* infections worldwide. Kenta has also developed a multivalent real-time PCR diagnostic test in collaboration with Roche Diagnostics which allows for the rapid identification of the infecting serotype, and thus the rapid administration of the correct antibody.

In regard to an exit for investors, Georgescu-Kyburz said the company was open to either a future IPO or a trade sale. She thought that a partner of KBPA101 would be a likely candidate for a buyer because of the company's complimentary pipeline and its MAbIgX® technology platform. Aside of the *P. aeruginosa* program, Kenta has numerous antibodies against bacterial and viral hospital-acquired infections in preclinical development. She added that the MAbIgX® technology also has the potential for identification of anti-cancer antibodies, something which, although not currently being pursued, could be an attractive asset for buyers.