

# GSK cancer vaccine fails second test

## Company plans to continue the clinical trial

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Reuters

AN experimental cancer vaccine from GlaxoSmithKline has failed in a second test — this time against lung cancer — but the British company said it still hoped to identify a sub-group of patients in which it would work.

Thursday's news that the MAGE-A3 therapeutic vaccine did not help patients with non-small cell lung cancer in a late-stage study is a further blow to the high-risk, high-reward project after a similar setback in melanoma in September.

Unlike traditional preventative vaccines, the MAGE-A3 treatment is designed for people with established disease, helping their immune systems to prevent the return of disease after surgery.

The large Phase III study, involving more than 2,000 lung cancer patients, found that the experimental therapy did not help patients live longer without their disease recurring.

Nonetheless, GSK plans to continue the clinical trial in the hope of finding a sub-population that will benefit. It is also doing the same with patients suffering from melanoma and results of analyses looking at these sub-sets of patients with particular genetic profiles are expected in 2015.

Vincent Brichard, head of immunotherapeutics at GSK Vaccines, said: "The company was disappointed by the outcome but remained committed to the project."

Shares in GSK fell by 2



NEW INNOVATION: MAGE-A3 treatment is designed to help people to prevent the return of disease after surgery

per cent by 0945 GMT, underperforming a 0.7 per cent decline in the European drugs sector.

Many investors had been expecting a disappointing read-out from the lung cancer study, following the earlier setback in melanoma, and there are doubts as to whether GSK will be able to prove the vaccine works for a smaller group of genetically selected patients.

But despite the problems GSK chief executive Andrew Witty painted a surprisingly upbeat picture of prospects for MAGE-A3 at full-year results last month. Witty described the cancer vaccine and another drug for heart disease called darapladib that has also disappointed in tests as among the most promising in the company's pipeline.

Citi analyst Andrew Baum said he estimated there was a 10 per cent probability that MAGE-A3 could result in a significant benefit in a gene-signature defined population group, which would still be a substantial market.

As a result, Citi has a risk-adjusted sales forecast for the product of \$360 million in 2022.

Other companies, including Bristol-Myers Squibb, Roche and Merck, have had some recent notable successes in clinical trials of innovative drugs to boost the immune system, but GSK is still pushing the scientific boundaries with its vaccine-based approach.

Immunotherapy, in which the body's immune system is enlisted to fight tumor cells, is a hot area of pharmaceutical research.

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