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Teva buys Asthma treatment rights from Yissum

The treatment was found in testing to have eliminated four different types of allergic diseases in mice.

Gali Weinreb — 13 Aug 07 17:19

[Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.](#) (Nasdaq: [TEVA](#); TASE: [TEVA](#)) has signed an agreement with [Yissum Technology Transfer Company of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) for the commercialization of an asthma treatment. The company paid Yissum an initial sum for the rights to develop the product, probably not more than a few hundred thousand dollars, given the product's current development status) as well milestone payments and royalties that could amount to tens of millions of dollars and more should the drug be successful.

The treatment was developed by Prof. Francesca Levi-Schaffer of the Department of Pharmacology at the School of Pharmacy at the Hebrew University. Researchers at Levi's laboratory have a mechanism that regulates the function of mast cells, known as mast cells or eosinophiles. When exposed to allergens, mast cells react violently and release an enormous array of pro-inflammatory substances, of which histamine is a well known example. These substances trigger allergic symptoms such as asthma.

The researchers identified a receptor protein on mast cells, termed CD300a., which prevents cells from unleashing allergic responses. They found, however, that simply targeting it could result in undesired, overall immune suppression. The researchers therefore developed a small, synthetic, antibody fragment that has the unusual ability of recognizing two targets simultaneously - the receptor CD300a and a mast cell-specific marker. Thus, the antibody targets CD300a only on the surface of mast cells, avoiding suppression of other immune cells. The antibody potently eliminated four different types of allergic diseases in mice.

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