August 8, 2013 11:12 AM ET

Kite Pharma Appoints Leading Cancer Immunotherapy Experts to its Scientific Advisory Board

Los Angeles, CA - August 8, 2013 - Kite Pharma Inc. (Kite), a clinical stage biotechnology company focused on developing engineered autologous T cell therapy (eACT) products for cancer, today announced the appointment of three leading experts in the areas of immunotherapy, chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) technology, and gene therapy to its Scientific Advisory Board (SAB).

"Kite is fortunate to attract these world-leading immunotherapy and cancer researchers to our advisory board," said Aya Jakobovits, Ph.D., President and Chief Executive Officer of Kite. "Their experience and insight will be invaluable for the development and progression of our eACT product pipeline."

The new SAB members are:

Ronald Levy, M.D. - Professor of Medicine, Director of the Lymphoma Program and Former Chief of the Division of Oncology at Stanford University, CA. Dr. Levy is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine. Dr. Levy has pioneered immunotherapy for lymphoma and made many contributions to elucidating the molecular pathways underlying the initiation and progression of this disease. He was the first to successfully treat human lymphoma with a monoclonal antibody, and made important contributions to the development of rituximab (Rituxan®) for the treatment of lymphoma. Dr. Levy has received international acclaim for his work, including the Karnofsky Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the Medal of Honor by the American Cancer Society, Armand Hammer Award for Cancer Research, General Motors Charles Kettering Prize, the Damashek Prize from the American Society of Hematology, and the King Faisal International Prize in Medicine.

Zelig Eshhar, Ph.D - Chairman of Immunology Research at the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center and Professor Emeritus at the Weizmann Institute in Israel. Dr. Eshhar pioneered the CAR approach (or T-Body as he termed it) to redirect T cells to recognize, engage and kill patient's tumor cells by engineering them with a construct that combines the anti-target specificity of an antibody with T cell activation domains. Dr. Eshhar's research led to the design of leading CAR constructs and to establishment of the optimal therapeutic strategies that paved the way for clinical trials at leading centers. These studies have demonstrated the ability of CAR-engineered T cells to provide significant and durable clinical benefit to patients with advanced hematological and solid tumors. Dr. Eshhar was also instrumental in introducing monoclonal antibody technology to Israeli academic institutions and to therapeutic and diagnostic biomedical research. His achievements were recognized by several international awards, most recently the CAR Pioneering award by the ATTACK European Consortium.

Inder M. Verma, Ph.D - Irwin and Joan Jacobs Chair of Exemplary Science and American Cancer Society Professor of Molecular biology at The Salk Institute, CA. Dr. Verma is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Philosophical Society, and foreign associate of Indian National academy of sciences. Dr. Verma is one of the world's leading authorities on the development and application of viral vectors for gene transfer and gene therapy. His laboratory pioneered the development of retroviral and lentiviral vectors and their application for use in in clinical trials, as well for genome modulation, elucidation of tumorgenesis, and stem cell biology. Derivations of these vectors are currently being used in multiple clinical trials for different disease indications. He has received recognition for his work, including the American Society for Gene Therapy Outstanding Achievement Award, the Pasarow Award in Cancer Research, the Columbia University Spector Prize, and the Vilcek Foundation Prize.

"These three superb scientists are recognized for their major discoveries in the fields of immunotherapy and cancer," Owen Witte M.D., Kite's SAB Chairman, Professor of Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics and Director of the Broad Stem Cell Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Their extensive experience in this field will be invaluable to Kite as the company advances its immunotherapy products to the marketplace."

About the eACT Platform

Clinical evidence has demonstrated that a patients' peripheral blood T cells, which have been engineered with T cell receptor (TCRs) and Chimeric Antigen Receptors (CARs) that recognize tumor specific molecules, can traffic directly to the tumor, become activated upon engagement with the tumor antigen, and selectively eradicate tumors. Clinical studies performed at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) using these types of engineered peripheral blood T cells have been associated with significant and durable objective clinical responses in cancer patients with advanced metastatic disease, including those with refractory melanoma, sarcoma, lymphoma and leukemia. These encouraging results highlight eACT as an emerging therapeutic modality that could provide new personalized targeted therapy options for cancer patients spanning the spectrum of disease from its early stages to the salvage setting.

About Kite Pharma, Inc.

Kite Pharma, Inc. is a privately held development stage biotechnology company engaged in the design and development of cutting-edge immunotherapeutic products to treat different cancer indications. Kite's lead products include antigens associated with a wide variety of tumor types, and are initially being developed for the treatment of renal cell carcinoma and hepatocellular carcinoma. These potential therapies are designed to stimulate a patient's own immune system to help fight cancer and could represent novel strategies for the management and treatment of these otherwise incurable diseases. Kite Pharma is based in Los Angeles, CA. For more information, visit the company's website at www.kitepharma.com.