Sunesis Completes Enrollment of Voreloxin Phase 1b/2 Combination Trial in Acute Myeloid Leukemia

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SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA, Jan 21, 2010 (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX News Network) -- Sunesis Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (NASDAQ: SNSS) today reported that it has completed enrollment in its Phase 1b/2 clinical trial evaluating voreloxin, the company's lead compound, in combination with cytarabine, a widely used chemotherapy, in patients with relapsed or refractory acute myeloid leukemia (AML). A total of 110 patients with relapsed or refractory AML were enrolled in this study, including 50 primary refractory or first relapse AML patients enrolled in the expansion Phase 2 segments of the trial.

"Full enrollment of this trial marks an important step in our development of voreloxin in AML, a disease in which we plan to begin Phase 3 clinical testing later this year," said Daniel Swisher, Chief Executive Officer of Sunesis. "The Phase 1b/2 combination trial has already generated valuable data regarding voreloxin's anti-leukemic activity, including low 30- and 60-day all-cause mortality and favorable complete remission, safety and preliminary survival results in a difficult to treat patient population. Furthermore, we have treated nearly 300 AML patients to date, including 113 patients in REVEAL-1, the Phase 2 single agent voreloxin study in older patients unlikely to benefit from standard induction chemotherapy. We are very encouraged by the results of our AML clinical program, and believe voreloxin could provide a meaningful advancement to current standards of care."

The Phase 1b/2 trial is designed to evaluate the safety, pharmacokinetics and anti-leukemic activity of escalating doses of voreloxin when administered on days one and four with cytarabine, given either as a continuous infusion of 400 mg/m2 daily for five days or as a two hour IV bolus of 1 g/m2 daily for five days. A recommended pivotal dose-regimen of voreloxin used in combination with cytarabine has been identified based on results of the Phase 1b/2 clinical trial to date.

About Voreloxin

Voreloxin is a first-in-class anticancer quinolone derivative, or AQD, a class of compounds that has not been used previously for the treatment of cancer. Voreloxin both intercalates DNA and inhibits topoisomerase II, resulting in replication-dependent, site-selective DNA damage, G2 arrest and apoptosis. Voreloxin is currently being evaluated in a fully enrolled single agent Phase 2 clinical trial (known as the REVEAL-1 trial) in previously untreated elderly AML patients and in a fully enrolled Phase 1b/2 clinical trial combining voreloxin with cytarabine for the treatment of patients with relapsed/refractory AML. A Phase 2 single agent trial in platinum-resistant ovarian cancer has also completed enrollment. Sunesis expects to begin Phase 3 testing in AML later in 2010.

About Acute Myeloid Leukemia

AML is a rapidly progressing cancer of the blood characterized by the uncontrolled proliferation of immature blast cells in the bone marrow. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society estimates that nearly 13,000 new cases of AML will be diagnosed and approximately 9,000 deaths from AML will occur in the U.S. in 2009. AML is generally a disease of older adults, and the median age of a patient diagnosed with AML is about 67 years. AML patients with relapsed or refractory disease and newly diagnosed AML patients over 60 years of age with poor prognostic risk factors typically die within one year, resulting in an acute need for new treatment options for these patients.

About Sunesis Pharmaceuticals

Sunesis is a biopharmaceutical company focused on the development and commercialization of new oncology therapeutics for the treatment of solid and hematologic cancers. Sunesis has built a highly experienced cancer drug development organization committed to advancing its lead product candidate, voreloxin, in multiple indications to improve the lives of people with cancer. For additional information on Sunesis Pharmaceuticals, please visit http://www.sunesis.com.

This press release contains forward-looking statements, including without limitation statements related to voreloxin's efficacy and safety profile both as a single agent and in combination with other AML treatments in clinical studies, voreloxin's mechanism of action, results that may warrant further clinical evaluation of voreloxin and the timing of Phase 3 studies of voreloxin in AML. Words such as "plan," "encouraged," "believe," "expects" and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking

statements. These forward-looking statements are based upon Sunesis' current expectations. Forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties. Sunesis' actual results and the timing of events could differ materially from those anticipated in such forward-looking statements as a result of these risks and uncertainties, which include without limitation, the risk that Sunesis' drug development activities for voreloxin could be halted or significantly delayed for various reasons, the risk that Sunesis' clinical trials for voreloxin may not demonstrate safety or efficacy or lead to regulatory approval, the risk that preliminary data and trends may not be predictive of future data or results, the risk that Sunesis' nonclinical studies and clinical trials may not satisfy the requirements of the FDA or other regulatory agencies, risks related to the conduct of Sunesis' clinical trials, risks related to the manufacturing of voreloxin, and the risk that Sunesis' proprietary rights may not adequately protect voreloxin. These and other risk factors are discussed under "Risk Factors" and elsewhere in Sunesis' Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2009 and other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Sunesis expressly disclaims any obligation or undertaking to release publicly any updates or revisions to any forward-looking statements contained herein to reflect any change in the company's expectations with regard thereto or any change in events, conditions or circumstances on which any such statements are based.

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