

Small biotech companies dominate the pipeline for Microbiome-targeted therapies, says GlobalData

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New Delhi: With smaller biotech companies dominating the pipeline for microbiome-targeted therapeutics, large pharma firms, such as Johnson & Johnson (J&J), are eager to collaborate with biotech companies and academic labs to further the development of microbiome-targeted therapeutics in immunology, according to leading data and analytics company GlobalData.

The company's report 'Microbiome-Targeted Therapeutics in Immunology' focuses on the development of therapies targeting the skin microbiome for the treatment of acne, atopic dermatitis and psoriasis, and on treatments targeting the gut microbiome for the treatment of Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Changes in the interaction between the human body and microorganisms or shifts in the proportion of bacterial species have the potential to have a major impact on health, from metabolism to immunity. As research on the human microbiome has so far produced few

therapies, there are ample opportunities for pharma companies entering into the microbiome space,

Therapies targeting the gut microbiome lead the pipeline as of first quarter of 2018. There are 10 pipeline therapies in clinical development (Phase I through Phase IIb/III) targeting the gut microbiome, while there are only three pipeline therapies in clinical development (Phase I through Phase III) targeting the skin microbiome.

Canada-based Qu Biologics holds the strongest position in the gut microbiome space whereas American biotech AOBiome leads in the skin microbiome space. Qu Biologics has QBECO-SSI under Phase IIb development for Crohn's disease and Phase IIa development for ulcerative colitis and AOBiome has B-244 in Phase III development for acne and Phase II development for atopic dermatitis.

Alexandra Annis, Pharma Analyst at GlobalData, says: "Qu Biologics and AOBiome are the only two companies with microbiome-targeted therapeutics in both early- and late-stage development, but they are both banking on the success of the same drug, marking a substantial risk for these companies.

"Key opinion leaders (KOLs) interviewed by GlobalData indicated that pipeline therapies targeting the gut microbiome show promise, but have challenges to overcome before gaining approval due to lack of science knowledge."

GlobalData anticipates ample opportunities for therapies targeting the skin microbiome as there are only three pipeline therapies in clinical development – AOBiome's Phase II/III B-244, Matrisys Bioscience's Phase IIa MSB-01 for the treatment of atopic dermatitis and SFA Therapeutics' Phase I drug for psoriasis.

KOLs also expressed excitement around the potential use of fecal microbiota transplant (FMT) as treatment of inflammatory bowel disease and IBS.

Annis adds: "FMT presents a promising treatment option in the future. However, it has a long way to go before the procedure is standardized and it gains approval. If FMT becomes more streamlined and widely available, and its long-term safety is confirmed, it could impact the sales of other treatment options."