

New approach to treating cancer

The people of Niiki Pharma propose a completely new approach to treating cancer tumours that have become resistant to other treatments. Dr. Hooshmand Sheshbaradaran, PhD, CEO and co-founder of Niiki Pharma, explains how.



An Iranian-American, Dr. Sheshbaradaran was doing his PhD in Virology & Immunology at the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, when his mother passed away from brain cancer, aged just 42. That completely changed his focus and career, he says. "I decided to dedicate myself to cancer research." After gaining experience in senior positions at a number of high-profile pharmaceutical companies, he found like-minded people and together they established Niiki Pharma, in 2007. "Niiki is the Persian word for goodness. Good is what we want to do with Niiki Pharma."

At Niiki Pharma they have adopted a new approach to the development of cancer drugs, says Dr. Sheshbaradaran. "There about a dozen or so classes of anti-cancer drugs. The problem is that patients become resistant to them. The pharmaceutical industry tends to follow trends: once a new drug is successfully brought to the market, subsequent new drugs typically follow on from that. We don't want to do that. We're interested only in developing first-in-class drugs targeted at overcoming the cancer's resistance." Dr. Sheshbaradaran

additionally feels that Niiki Pharma has a role to play in merging big pharma experience with biotech creativity, which also means keeping overheads to a minimum. "We have married the experience and market understanding typical of big pharma, with the agility of a biotech."

Niiki's drug development strategy is to source compounds that show great promise, but have been overlooked somewhat. Diamonds in the rough, as Dr. Sheshbaradaran calls them. The two drugs currently in Niiki's development pipeline were invented by Prof. Bernhard Keppler (University of Vienna), one of the world's leading bio-inorganic chemists. The furthest advanced compound (NKP-1339) is currently at the start of phase II. "We're working with some of the top oncologists in the US, we're very pleased with that," says Dr. Sheshbaradaran. "The patients we treat are metastatic cancer patients who have no other treatment options left. We're very pleased with the results so far. We've worked out the right dosage and are seeing shrinkage of the tumour and long term disease stabilization in several patients who have failed all standard

treatments. We're also very encouraged by the fact that the side effects are mild compared to the severe side effects of conventional anti-cancer drugs: NKP-1339's common side effects are fever and chills, and both of those are manageable." Dr. Sheshbaradaran emphasises that Niiki Pharma doesn't take any shortcuts in research. "We know what big pharma wants and what the regulatory bodies want. The industry has seen how fast we're bringing our two drug candidates forward and as a result we are approached by a number of parties wishing to make use of our experience. But we target measured growth, we want to stay focused. Our priority now is to find a suitable partner to ensure rapid global development of our drug candidates."

NIIKIPHARMA
Bringing to Life New Cancer Treatments™

Niiki Pharma
80 River Street, Suite 5D
Hoboken, NJ 07030
USA
Website: www.niikipharma.com

