

**METASTATIC MELANOMA**

▲ **Antigenics' (AGEN)** Oncophage vaccine extends the survival of late stage metastatic melanoma patients. Findings from its preliminary analysis of a randomized Phase 3 study of Oncophage (vitespen; formerly HSPPC-96) showed that in all randomized (intent-to-treat) stage IV M1a melanoma patients, **median survival improved by more than 50 percent** in the Oncophage-treated arm compared with those in the physician's choice treatment arm (20.9 months versus 12.8 months), which included the current array of therapies such as chemotherapeutics, biological agents and/or surgery. This is the first Phase 3 randomized trial of a cancer vaccine to show a potential survival benefit in this category of melanoma patients.

This is encouraging news and is taken by the general investors as such. Comparison of survival data of the two groups in stage IV M1a category was made using the Kaplan-Meier method.(1) The survival curve in the Oncophage arm clearly separates from the physician's choice arm, and the difference appears indicative of a clinical benefit for Oncophage-treated stage IV M1a patients. The difference has not achieved statistical significance at the time of this preliminary analysis. A final analysis is expected during the first quarter 2006. For more details read: [Antigenics Announces Preliminary Survival Data from its Randomized Phase 3 Metastatic Melanoma Trial](#)

AVIAN FLU

▲ **BioCryst Pharmaceuticals (BCRX)** An article in the New York Times highlighted the advantages of the BioCryst drug **permamivir** as the most promising drug on the horizon for the treatment of avian flu.

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