Aduro Biotech Announces Milestone Achieved under Merck Collaboration for Initiation of Phase 2 Trial of Anti-CD27 Agonist MK-5890 in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer

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BERKELEY, Calif., Feb. 06, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Aduro Biotech, Inc. (NASDAQ: ADRO), a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on developing therapies targeting the Stimulator of Interferon Genes (STING) and A Proliferation Inducing Ligand (APRIL) pathways for the treatment of cancer, autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, today announced that the company earned a $10.0 million development milestone payment under its worldwide licensing agreement with Merck (known as MSD outside the United States and Canada) for the initiation of a Phase 2 clinical trial of MK-5890, an anti-CD27 agonist, in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC).

"We are thrilled Merck is continuing to advance MK-5890 through development with the initiation of a Phase 2 clinical trial in NSCLC," said Andrea van Elsas, Ph.D., chief scientific officer of Aduro. "The achievement of this milestone would not be possible without the efforts of the exceptional team we built at Aduro Biotech Europe and the B-select technology that created several monoclonal antibodies, including MK-5890 and BION-1301, an anti-APRIL antibody we are currently developing for IgA nephropathy."

The Phase 2 trial is designed to assess the efficacy and safety of pembrolizumab in combination with MK-5890 in patients with advanced squamous or non-squamous NSCLC that have been previously treated with anti-PD-L1 therapy (see www.clinicaltrials.gov, identifier NCT04165096). The study is one of three pembrolizumab substudies being conducted under one pembrolizumab umbrella master protocol (MK-3475-U01).

About CD27 and Aduro's Anti-CD27 Antibody
CD27 is a co-stimulatory receptor expressed on different immune cells, such as T-lymphocytes and NK (natural killer) cells. It has been recognized as having an important role in priming, enhancing and sustaining a productive anti-cancer (CD8+ T-cell) adaptive immune response. In preclinical studies, anti-CD27 activation was shown to enhance T-cell response, which in combination with immune checkpoint inhibition demonstrated the ability to achieve complete tumor eradication.

In 2014, Merck, through certain affiliates, entered into a worldwide license agreement for the development and commercialization of CD27 antibody agonists. Aduro's anti-CD27 antibody, which was identified with its proprietary B-select monoclonal antibody technology, targets a functional epitope on CD27 demonstrating potent activation of the CD27 co-stimulatory pathway in pre-clinical studies. As a part of the worldwide license agreement, and in addition to payments received, including the $15 million up-front payment, Aduro is eligible to receive future development, commercial and net sales milestone payments. In addition, Aduro is eligible to receive royalties in the mid-single digits to low teens based on any net sales of the product, if it is approved for marketing.

About Aduro
Aduro Biotech, Inc. is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery, development and commercialization of therapies that are designed to harness the body's natural immune system for the treatment of patients with challenging diseases. Aduro's product candidates in the Stimulator of Interferon Genes (STING) and A Proliferation Inducing Ligand (APRIL) pathways are being investigated in cancer, autoimmune and inflammatory diseases. ADU-S100 (MIW815), which potentially activates the intracellular STING receptor for a potent tumor-specific immune response, is being evaluated in a Phase 2 clinical trial in combination with pembrolizumab, an approved anti-PD-1 antibody, as a first-line treatment for recurrent or metastatic head and neck squamous cell carcinoma. BION-1301, a first-in-class humanized IgG4 monoclonal antibody that fully blocks APRIL binding to both the BCMA and TACI receptors, is being evaluated in IgA nephropathy. Aduro is collaborating with a number of leading global pharmaceutical companies to help expand and drive its product pipeline. For more information, please visit www.aduro.com.

Cautionary Note on Forward-Looking Statements
This press release contains forward-looking statements for purposes of the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Forward-looking statements include statements regarding our current intentions or expectations concerning, among other things, the potential for our technology, including MK-5890, the continued advancement of our programs, our eligibility to receive future milestones or royalties, and our collaborations with leading global pharmaceutical companies to help expand and drive our product pipeline. In some cases, you can identify these statements by forward-looking words such as "may," "will," "continue," "anticipate," "intend," "could," "project," "expect" or the negative or plural of these words or similar expressions. Forward-looking statements are not guarantees of future performance and are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results and events to differ materially from those anticipated, including, but not limited to, our history of net operating losses and uncertainty regarding our ability to achieve profitability, our ability to develop and commercialize our product candidates, our ability to use and expand our technology platforms to build a pipeline of product candidates, our ability to obtain and maintain regulatory approval of our product candidates, our ability to operate in a competitive industry and compete successfully against competitors that have greater resources than we do, our reliance on third parties, the success of our restructuring, our ability retain senior management and other highly qualified personnel, and our ability to obtain and adequately protect intellectual property rights for our product candidates. We discuss many of these risks in greater detail under the heading "Risk Factors" contained in our quarterly report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2019, on file with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and our other filings with the SEC. Any forward-looking statements that we make in this press release speak only as of the date of this press release. We assume no obligation to update our forward-looking statements whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, after the date of this press release.

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