

Incyte buys another shot at vitiligo with Villaris



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In July Incyte got the first approved drug for the autoimmune disease vitiligo, in the shape of its topical Jak inhibitor Opzelura. But the group clearly sees room for more therapies in the disorder, as today's takeout of the privately held Villaris Therapeutics for \$70m up front shows. Villaris, founded by the investment firm Medicxi, was solely focused on auremolimab, a preclinical-stage anti-IL-15 antibody; the theory is that blocking IL-15 [depletes the memory T-cells responsible for the appearance of the white patches that characterise vitiligo](#). However, auremolimab is well behind the leader here, Amgen's ordesekimab, which looks set to yield phase 2 data in the disease soon. Broadening auremolimab's indications might be on the cards for Incyte, and a look at the anti-IL-15 pipeline suggests coeliac disease as a potential avenue. There is not too much competition in the anti-IL-15 space; however, there is plenty of activity with [a related cytokine, IL-2, for autoimmune uses](#). Here another deal was struck last week, with Almirall paying China's Simcere \$15m up front to license the IL-2 mutant fusion protein SIM0278 outside greater China.

Selected anti-IL-15 projects in development for autoimmune disease

Project	Company	Description	Trial details/note
Phase 2			
Ordesekimab (AMG 714/PRV-015)	Amgen/Provention Bio	Anti-IL-15 MAb	Reveal * in vitiligo completes Oct 2022; Proactive in coeliac disease, data due YE 2023
Phase 1			
EQ-101 (BNZ-1)	Equillium (via Bioniz)	IL-2, IL-9 & IL-15 inhibitor	Ph2 in alopecia areata to begin H2 2022
CALY-002	Calypso Biotech	Anti-IL-15 MAb	NCT04593251 in healthy volunteers, coeliac and eosinophilic oesophagitis pts, completes Sep 2023
Preclinical			
EQ-102 (BNZ-2)	Equillium (via Bioniz)	IL-15/21 inhibitor	Ph1 in coeliac disease to begin H2 2022
Auremolimab (VM6)	Incyte (via Villaris Therapeutics)	Anti-IL-15R β MAb	Ph1 to begin 2023 (vitiligo focus)

*Investigator-sponsored trial. Source: Evaluate Pharma & [clinicaltrials.gov](#).

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