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Afrigen Chief On mRNA Vaccine Candidate, IP Hoops, Market-Shaping Efforts

by Anju Ghangurde

Petro Terblanche, managing director of Afrigen Biologics, talks to *Scrip* about a range of critical issues pertaining to the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine candidate being progressed under the wider WHO-backed technology hub initiative in South Africa and which is based on publicly-available Moderna data. Various tools and approaches are on hand to tackle the labyrinth of patents involved, though the hub, the executive underscores, will not infringe intellectual property rights.

Afrigen Biologics has been in the spotlight after it developed an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine candidate based on publicly available [Moderna, Inc.](#) data. The Cape Town-based firm's efforts are part of a wider World Health Organization-backed mRNA vaccine technology hub initiative in South Africa.

Afrigen's managing director, Petro Terblanche, discusses with *Scrip* plans to progress the candidate, collaboration discussions with firms across countries including in the US and Canada, and production scale-up challenges. There have also been "outreach" efforts from companies in India and also China, she noted.

Terblanche outlined the various options and tools to traverse the complex intellectual property rights landscape for mRNA vaccines but underscored that the hub and the WHO have no intent to infringe patents.

"I think this is the one part that challenges all our cognitive capabilities. There are many players, many patents. There are composition patents, process patents, design patents – it's a very complex landscape," she explained. Listen to the full interview to hear what more she had to say.

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