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Podcast: Ocugen CEO Musunuri On Gene Therapy Candidates, The Omicron Advantage

Phase I Trials For OCU-400 Set For Q1 2022

by **Vibha Ravi**

Ocugen's mutation-agnostic candidate for retinitis pigmentosa and leber congenital amaurosis is set for Phase I trials in the US. In this exclusive audio interview, founder and CEO Shankar Musunuri speaks to *Scrip* about seeking partners beyond CanSino Biologics for the candidate while stressing Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine could hold promise against the Omicron variant.

The formation of any company involves blood, sweat and tears and the story has been no different for [Ocugen Inc.](#)

In an audio interview with *Scrip*, founder-CEO Shankar Musunuri gives us a glimpse of the journey and shares his excitement about two gene therapy candidates for eye diseases.

OCU-400, a candidate to treat retinitis pigmentosa and a rare genetic eye disorder, leber congenital amaurosis, will soon be heading to the clinic for human trials. OCU-410 for age-related macular degeneration is still in the preclinical stage but has a larger canvas, with the disease being a leading cause of visual impairment and blindness throughout the world.

The company has tied up with Chinese firm [CanSino Biologics Inc.](#) for developing these two candidates and Musunuri shares further commercialization plans.

Meanwhile, he emphasizes the good intentions behind trying to bring [Bharat Biotech's](#) COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin to the US and Canada. The broad immunity it has demonstrated against variants

like Delta and could potentially show against Omicron might give it an edge over [Pfizer Inc.](#) and [Moderna, Inc.](#)'s mRNA vaccines, Musunuri feels.

However, what does a clinical trial hold by the US Food and Drug Administration and a delay in filing for emergency use authorization in Canada mean for the vaccine and company? Find out in this podcast.

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2:17 Advice for aspiring start-ups

3:55 Memorable and forgettable parts of entrepreneurship journey

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9:19 Way forward for COVID-19 vaccine post clinical hold

15:20 Will Pfizer beat Ocugen to the 2-5 age group?

16:38 Does the Omicron variant complicate matters?

22:37 Possibility of a booster

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36:18 CanSino Biologics' agreement for OCU-400 and OCU-410

39:17 Risks in gene therapy development

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