1) How and when did your company start, and where are you located?

The company has been founded in March 2016 and is located in Freienbach, Switzerland. The company was founded by my Martin Bachmann as vaccine expert, John Förster as psoriasis and dermatology expert and Patrik Paulus for the financial expertise.

2) How many employees do you have, and how do you find and attract them?

We function largely as a virtual company to remain flexible and outsource most of the work. We have close links to University of Oxford and Dundee, UK, university of Bern, Switzerland as well as the BRSC institute in Riga, Latvia. We also work closely and share infrastructure with Saiba GmbH, another Swiss Biotech company specialized in virus-like particles.

3) What are the main focus and platform technology(ies) of your company?

We focus on the skin as a therapeutic area. Our lead-compound is a vaccine against psoriasis, based on active vaccination against interleukin-17, a key cytokine in the disease. There is a large body of experience with IL17 as a disease target, as monoclonal antibodies neutralizing the cytokine are extremely successful at treating the disease and have an excellent safety profile. We have validated the method in mice and more recently in dogs and horses, where targeting similar cytokines has been extremely successful at treating skin disease.

4) Can you provide a short overview of your product pipeline?

We are currently focusing on psoriasis but are actively looking into additional indications, such as multiple sclerosis or atopic dermatitis.

5) Who is your competition, and what advantage(s) do your products / technology offer?

We are the leading company in active vaccination against cytokines for the treatment of skin diseases. We are pursuing a unique vaccine platform that is based on a plant-virus derived virus-like particle that has been optimized to induce immune responses in humans by incorporating a universal T cell epitope derived from tetanus toxin (NPJ Vaccines. 2017 Oct 23;2:30.). Compared to monoclonal antibodies, our product is much more economical to produce, is easier to apply and ensures that patients can be treated long-term, as no antibodies will be induced that neutralize the IL-17-specific antibodies.

6) What were the “highlights” in your recent product development?

We have been able to demonstrate in preclinical models that our vaccine approach is superior to classical approaches without universal T cell epitope, giving better vaccine responses in older individuals, and have been able to induce long-term protection against models of psoriasis.

7) What have been the most critical problems in developing products in your field, and how can your company’s technology help overcome these problems?

It has been notoriously difficult to induce sufficient levels of anti-cytokine antibodies in humans by vaccination. We have shown in horses and dogs that we can induce sufficient levels of such antibodies to treat actual skin diseases, not just model diseases in mice. We are very confident that these findings can be extended to humans.

8) What is your company’s value proposition?

Psoriasis is a multi-billion dollar market. With our new technology which has much lower costs of good, the pricing could be done such that a large fraction of the world population would have access to the IL-17 neutralizing medicine. Hence, we would ask for a lower price but access much more patients.

9) What business development strategy do you pursue?

We want to achieve clinical proof-of-concept and find a partner for further development.

10) How does your company attract partners?

Together with good clinical data, we will have a very convincing packet for big pharma. And IL-17 may just be the beginning.

11) Who are your most important partners?

We are focused on research and our most important partners are universities and research institutes.

12) How do you balance performing work in-house vs outsourcing?

We clearly focus on out-sourcing. We see ourselves as facilitators of the vaccine development program. We have a detailed
plan and all partners in place for a smooth movement of the vaccine through GMP-production, toxicological studies and clinical assessment. This allows us maximal flexibility combined with very low operational costs.

13) What are your product development goals for the next 3 years?
   We want to reach clinical proof of concept and be ready for partnering.