News story: Action to stop safe space for criminal and terrorist communications

The Security Minister has today given a direction to Ofcom to ensure our security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement and other emergency services have access to the information they need to keep the public safe.

The direction, made under section 5 of the Communications Act 2003, requires that commercial multi-user gateways may only be licensed where the supplier can demonstrate that callers can be identified.

Commercial multi-user gateways use SIM cards to allow calls made through them to be routed through different operators. Calls made using these devices from fixed lines to mobiles are treated by the recipient's network as if they were made by a mobile phone, rather than a fixed line.

The move comes after Ofcom announced in July that, following a public consultation, it had concluded that it was required to exempt the devices from current licensing requirements under section 8(1) of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006.

Ofcom set out that the legislation prevented them from being able to take into account national security concerns.

Under the Communications Act 2003, Ministers can give a direction about communications networks on national security grounds.

The Security Minister's direction ensures any new regulations enabling the use of such devices will continue to protect national security.

This means that law enforcement, the security and intelligence agencies and emergency services can maintain vital capabilities to investigate suspected terrorists and criminals.

Signing the direction to Ofcom (PDF, 180KB, 1 page) , Security Minister Ben Wallace said:

> The first duty of Government is to protect the public.
>
> This direction is necessary to ensure that those charged with keeping families and communities safe have access to relevant and accurate information when they need it and when they have the appropriate authorisations in order to do their job.

The Home Office set out concerns that the use of these devices could endanger life in its response to Ofcom's consultation.

The direction does not seek to ban the use of the technology but ensures that when operated, it will not affect the ability of the security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement and other emergency services to investigate terrorism and serious crime, as well as to identify and locate people at risk of harm.

News story: 'Living medicine' cancer therapy starts clinical trials

London-based biopharmaceutical company Autolus is undertaking a novel cancer trial targeting T-cells.

Using CAR-T (chimeric antigen receptor T-cell) therapy, this 'living medicine' involves genetically engineering a patient's own immune cells to improve their cancer-fighting properties and then reinfusing these cells back into their bloodstream.

It could offer new hope to people with multiple myeloma, which is the second most common blood cancer. Multiple myeloma is characterised by malignant plasma cells that accumulate in the patient's bone marrow and produce abnormal proteins which can cause kidney problems, impairment of the immune system and further tumours to spread. There is currently no cure.

How it works

The study – which Autolus is calling APRIL – is for its AUTO2 product.

AUTO2 works by using a natural protein called APRIL ligand to target and bind with 2 cell receptors: B-cell maturation antigen (BCMA) and transmembrane activator and calcium modulator and cyclophilin ligand interactor (TACI).

Autolus believes that by adding APRIL ligand as a surface protein to the patients T cells it could improve the ability of the body's own immune system to detect and kill cancer cells. This simultaneous dual-targeting could also minimise the risk of the cancer cells escaping capture and so avoid the patient's disease from relapsing.

In the trial, patients with multiple myeloma will receive increasing doses of AUTO2. This will help to establish a recommended dose. It will then assess the safety, tolerability and clinical activity at this dose.

Testing at Autolus' laboratory.

Minimise the risk of the cancer cells escaping treatment

Dr Christian Itin, Autolus' CEO said:

> Breaking the defence mechanisms of cancers against T-cells is key to unlocking the curative potential of CAR-T cell therapies. AUTO2 is a first example of Autolus' approach to specifically re-programme the patient's own T-cells to minimise the risk of the cancer cells escaping treatment.
>
> With the start of this study we have transitioned to a clinical stage company; an important step on our path to build a fully integrated autologous CAR-T cell company with a portfolio of differentiated therapies for the treatment of patients with cancer.

Supporting the development of CAR-T therapy

An Innovate UK grant partially funded some of the early work on AUTO2. Autolus was granted just over £1.48 million to test the effectiveness of patients T-cells to target multiple myeloma cells when re-engineered with the ligand that binds to BCMA and TACI. Evidence gathered here has directly contributed to progress the development of this product to clinical trials.

Autolus has also been awarded Innovate UK funding in an additional 2 projects. In the first, the company will receive up to £1.15 million to address the particular problem of CAR T-cells attacking T-cell lymphomas. The second will look to establish a scalable, commercially-viable manufacturing process for CAR-T therapies, with grant costs of up to £744,565.

Spun out of University College London in 2014, Autolus has gone on to receive funding worth £70 million from investment groups, Arix, Syncona and Woodford Patient Capital Trust.

The company was recently highlighted as a 'one-to-watch' – an ambitious business that we have supported whose achievements promise to change the world – as part of our 10th anniversary celebrations.

The next steps

As well as progressingAUTO2, Autolus has a pipeline of products in development for haematological malignances and solid tumours, for which it has recently progressed another product – AUTO3 – into the clinic. This study involves 2 separate groups: children with leukemia and adults with lymphoma.

These 3 clinical trials will involve around 250 patients in hospitals across the UK. It is expected they will be completed by late 2021.

News story: The Prime Minister reappoints Lord Green to the Board of Trustees of the Natural History Museum.

The Prime Minister has reappointed The Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint as a Trustee of the Natural History Museum for a period of 4 years, until 1 April 2022. Lord Green is also currently Chair of the NHM Board of Trustees.

The Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint began his career as a civil servant with the Ministry of Overseas Development. In 1977, he joined McKinsey & Co Inc, management consultants, before joining The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited in 1982 with responsibility for corporate planning activities. He fulfilled a variety of roles at HSBC, culminating in becoming Group Chief Executive on 1 June 2003 and Group Chairman on 26 May 2006.

Lord Green was Chairman of the British Bankers' Association from 2006 to 2010, and was made a life peer on 16 November 2010 as Baron Green of Hurstpierpoint. He was Minister of State for Trade and Investment jointly at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills from 2011 to 2013.

He is a former trustee of The British Museum. He is married with two daughters.

Trustees of the Natural History Museum are not remunerated. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office Governance Code, and regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. It is a requirement of the Code that political activity by those appointed is declared. Lord Green has declared no such activity.

News story: AAIB Special Bulletin S3/2017 – HPH Glasflugel 304 eS, G-GSGS

This Special Bulletin contains preliminary information regarding a battery fire that occurred in a Front Electric Sustainer (FES) lithium polymer

battery of an HPH Glasflugel 304 eS sailplane. Three safety recommendations are made relating to the incorporation of a warning system to alert the pilot to the presence of a fire or other hazardous conditions occurring within FES battery compartments.

AAIB Special Bulletin S3/2017 – HPH Glasflugel 304 eS, G-GSGS

News story: British Hallmarking Council appoints new Chairman

In accepting the appointment, to which he was elected for a three year period, Noel said:

> I am delighted to be elected to lead this prestigious and important body. Hallmarking verifies the integrity of some of the most precious items we possess, both on a personal and a monetary level. Without the ability to these trust these precious items are what they say they are our jewellery industry would be badly undermined. All that glisters is indeed not gold.

Noel's key challenges will be to ensure the integrity and portability of UK hallmarks following Brexit, to ensure that consumers understand the value of hallmarks, supporting and protecting the UK's jewellery industry through the Council's advice to government, and to maintain the excellent worldwide reputation of the UK's four Assay Offices in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London and Sheffield.

Noel Hunter is a former Director of Warwickshire County Council, was a former Warden of the Birmingham Assay Office. a Vice President of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and also chairs the Myton Hospices, a Midlands based charity.

Noel's predecessor who led the Council for the last six years is Christopher Jewitt, who continues with a number of public duties as well as being a Director of Footprint Tools, Sheffield. In his opening address to the Council, Noel paid tribute to Christopher's prodigious and tireless work on behalf of the Council.