

2 September 2024

**Roquefort Therapeutics plc**

("Roquefort Therapeutics" or the "Company")

**Grant of MK Cell Patent & Licencing Update**

Roquefort Therapeutics (LSE:ROQ), the Main Market listed biotech company focused on developing first in class medicines in the high value and high growth immunology and oncology markets, confirms that the European Patent Office has granted the patent for its Mesodermal Killer ("MK") cell therapy, across 39 countries including the UK and EU<sup>[i]</sup>.

**Novel Cellular Immunology / Oncology Medicine**

Mesodermal Killer cells are a novel therapeutic cell type developed from the pioneering work of Roquefort Therapeutics' non-executive director, Nobel Laureate, Professor Sir Martin Evans. MK cells display a novel immunophenotype<sup>[ii]</sup> and thus represent a new class of cell, which is confirmed by the granting of this patent.

The Company's MK cells form an off-the-shelf (allogenic) cellular medicine, which underpins a promising new form of immunotherapy. MK cells have been shown to have both a direct effect and to recruit and activate Natural Killer ("NK") cells<sup>[iii]</sup> immune response in immunology and oncology indications. Cell based immunotherapy is an attractive new niche highlighted by the recent successful US\$167 million NASDAQ IPO of Artiva Biotherapeutics<sup>[iv]</sup> and the licensing deals of Dragonfly Therapeutics and Fate Therapeutics (NASDAQ: FATE), with both immunology and oncology indications.

The granted European Patent Organization patent is valid in 39 countries across Europe and provides protection for both the composition of matter of the MK cell type and for a population of NK cells primed (activated) by the MK cells. This affords Roquefort Therapeutics protection for a portfolio of multiple novel medicines comprising of the MK cells alone, MK + NK cells or primed NK cells.

**Pre-Clinical Development**

Since Roquefort Therapeutics acquired the MK cell programme as part of the Oncogeni acquisition in 2021, the Company has tested the MK cells in combination

with NK cells. MK cells were shown to activate Natural Killer cells and this activation produced up to a two-fold increase in cytotoxicity compared to treatment with NK cells alone. The data, whilst early stage, indicates how the MK cell programme can be used to activate Natural Killer cells in the high value difficult to treat immunology and oncology disease areas.

The Company plans to complete *in vivo* studies to demonstrate MK activation of NK cells in high value immunology and / or cancer indications in preparation for a key value inflection point of initiating a clinical study.

### **Out-Licensing Update**

As announced on 23 May 2024, Roquefort Therapeutics signed a term sheet for the out-licensing of its Midkine antibody portfolio to PDC FZ-LLC ("PDC"), a leading MEA pharmaceutical research and development organisation. The Company continues to work with PDC to progress this transaction to completion.

In addition, Roquefort Therapeutics is actively pursuing an out-licensing deal with Big Pharma for its STAT-6 siRNA programme. As part of this initiative the Company is carrying out additional *in vitro* experiments in an immunology setting - with the results expected shortly. The Company believes that positive immunology results will enhance the Company's existing positive oncology results and therefore strengthen the programme's attractiveness to potential licensees. The Company will update the market as this process progresses.

### **Roquefort Therapeutics CEO Ajan Reginald commented:**

*"The granting of this European patent for MK cell therapy highlights both the security of our foundational IP in confirming the novelty of the MK cells and the commercial potential of MK cells in immunology and oncology markets. These markets are highly attractive to both Big Pharma and to sophisticated Biotech investors, recently highlighted by Artiva's oversubscribed IPO in July 2024.*

*Roquefort Therapeutics has the potential to build a similar immunotherapy franchise having already established the ability to manufacture the allogenic (off-the-shelf) MK cells and to incorporate and prime NK cells in a scalable manufacturing process. The MK cells generate a significant activation of NK cells which may augment the efficacy of NK cells, which is the critical attribute in immunology and oncology indications. The strategic implication of the granting of the MK cell patent is that this creates a significant franchise opportunity in immunology for the Company.*

*We have had a busy summer meeting with PDC to work on progressing our licensing deal, as well as advancing the STAT-6 siRNA programme in immunology for Big Pharma partners interested in a potential licence or sale.*

*With both the MK cell therapy and the STAT-6 siRNA being in the attractive*

*immunology market, and the out-licensing deals we are working on closing in Q4, we believe the next few months have the potential to be transformational for Roquefort Therapeutics."*

## **ENDS**

### **Enquiries:**

<b>Roquefort Therapeutics plc</b>	+44 (0)20 3918 8633
Stephen West (Chairman) / Ajan Reginald (CEO)	
<b>SP Angel Corporate Finance LLP (Broker)</b>	+44 (0) 20 3470 0470
David Hignell / Vadim Alexandre / Devik Mehta	
<b>Buchanan (Public Relations)</b>	+44 (0)20 7466 5000
Ben Romney / Jamie Hooper / George Beale	
<b>Peak IR (Investor Relations)</b>	+33 (0)7 44 44 15 42
Seb Wykeham	

LEI: 254900P4SISIWOR9RH34

### **About Roquefort Therapeutics**

Roquefort Therapeutics (LSE:ROQ) is a Main Market listed biotech company developing first in class drugs in the high value and high growth oncology segment prior to partnering or selling to big pharma.

Roquefort Therapeutics' portfolio consists of five novel patent-protected pre-clinical anti-cancer medicines. The highly complementary profile of five best-in-class medicines consists of:

- Midkine antibodies with significant *in vivo* efficacy and toxicology studies;
- Midkine RNA therapeutics with novel anti-cancer gene editing action;
- Midkine mRNA therapeutics with novel anti-cancer approach;
- STAT-6 siRNA therapeutics targeting solid tumours with significant *in vivo* efficacy; and
- MK cell therapy with direct and NK cell-mediated anti-cancer action

For further information on Roquefort Therapeutics, please visit [www.roquefortplc.com](http://www.roquefortplc.com) and @RoquefortTherap on X (formerly Twitter).

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[i] The 39 contracting states of the European Patent Organization currently are: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom:

<https://www.epo.org/en/about-us/foundation/member-states>

[ii] which is different from any other cell type including MSCs and includes expression of CD16, CD96, CD112, CD137L, FasL, TRAIL and CD277 and some NK cell

[iii] L. Chapman, J. Abdi, S. Galvez-Peisl, A. Keating, Immunophenotypic and functional characterization of Mesodermal Killer (MK) cells: a novel cell type and potential cellular therapy for cancer Cytotherapy, Volume 22, Issue 5, Supplement, 2020, Page S121, ISSN 1465-3249, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcyt.2020.03.226>.

[iv] Artiva has a Phase 1/1b trial for AlloNK currently underway in lupus nephritis, with data expected in H1 2025 <https://seekingalpha.com/news/4125936-artiva-biotherapeutics-stock-trading-debut>

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Company Announcement - General

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