

Destiny Calls – The Times July 2023



City Veteran Sir Nigel Rudd goes on second date with Destiny

Just what the doctor ordered: a second does of Sir Nigel Rudd. The city veteran, who co-founded the Willaims conglomerate, doesn't typically dabble in the Aim market. He's best known lately for chairing big stuff and flogging it: retailer Boots, glassmaker Pilkington, engineer Invenys, private jet servicer Signature Aviation and defence outfit Meggitt.

Hence an obvious question: is he limbering up for an eventful six-timer with Destiny Pharma, the lossmaking biotech tiddler focused on preventing infections? Not only were eyebrows raised a fortnight ago when Rudd came out of the stock market retirement at the age of 76 for a second date with Destiny, so, too, was the share price. On his reappointment as chairman, the shares shot up 10 per cent to 34½p. They've kept rising, now up to 48p, valuing the group at £46 million.

A bit of context: Rudd owns 3 per cent of Destiny, having first invested 20 years ago in a business whose XF-73 treatment aims to prevent post-surgical infections, including MRSA, that have proved resistant to antibiotics. As former chairman, he led August 2017's 157p-a-share float, before stepping down a year later amid an "overboarding" row. But, having since lost its way, investors brought Rudd back. As he admits: "I don't know much about pharma but I do know about doing deals and making money. I'm here to add some business acumen", alongside new chief executive Chris Tovey. Destiny reckons there's a \$2 billion market in the US alone for XF-73.

But first it has to get through phase three trials and strike what Rudd calls "David and Goliath" deals with Big Pharma. On the rising shares, he cautions "it doesn't take a lot to move Aim". But already the patient is looking decidedly perkier.