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Singapore: Chongqing Zhifei Biological Product will work together with Merck Sharp and Dohme (MSD), to supply, promote and distribute MSD's cervical cancer vaccine, Gardasil. Cervical cancer is caused by infection with one or more kinds of human papillomavirus (HPV) and vaccination against HPV is an effective way to prevent cervical cancer.

"There are about 16 million new born babies each year. About half of these are girls, who must receive three doses of the vaccine. According to the calculations, the largest market volume is thus about 24 million doses. However, considering the large population in China and high prices of the vaccine, the coverage would be 50-to-70 percent. So the stable market volume is at least 10 million doses," said Wang Zilong, vice president, Shanghai Zerun Biotech.

According to MSD's 2011 annual report, sales of the HPV vaccine sold overseas over many years valued roughly $1.21 billion (excluding sales of SP-MSD, a joint venture in Europe), increasing by 22.4 percent year-on-year. Another HPV vaccine producer, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) had annual sales of 506 million euro, with a year-on-year growth of 109 percent.

At the moment, MSD has made great improvements in phase III clinical trials of the HPV vaccine, which is expected to launch in the market in 2015.