

Teijin, Pulmagen enter agreement for asthma drug

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Singapore: Tokyo-based Teijin Pharma, the core company of the Teijin Group's healthcare business, and Pulmagen Therapeutics, a UK-based drug development company, have signed an exclusive licensing agreement granting Teijin Pharma the rights to develop, manufacture and market a bronchial asthma therapeutic discovered by Pulmagen Therapeutics in Japan.

Teijin Pharma, which hopes to strengthen its commitment to improving the quality of life for patients by adding the new drug, ADC3680, to its portfolio, aims to begin phase I clinical trials for it in Japan in the next fiscal year starting in April 2013. Pulmagen Therapeutics has already commenced phase II clinical trials for the drug in the UK and will soon embark on a global phase II efficacy study.

ADC3680 acts by a novel anti-inflammatory mechanism that inhibits the binding of a key inflammatory mediator, PGD₂, to its receptor, CRTh₂. When bound to CRTh₂, PGD₂ activates inflammatory cells in the airway and exacerbates pulmonary inflammation. By antagonizing binding, ADC3680 helps to reduce pulmonary inflammation and thus improve overall asthma control.

The drug candidate is an oral agent with the potential for easy use as a medication in a wide range of patients, both as a monotherapy and in combination with other established drugs, including inhaled corticosteroids. It is also expected to be used in an expanded range of indications for respiratory diseases besides bronchial asthma, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and allergic rhinitis as well as in certain non-respiratory inflammatory diseases.

Bronchial asthma is characterized by chronic airway inflammation. In conventional treatment, the first recommendation is the inhalation of steroids with powerful anti-inflammatory action, possibly in combination with other drugs depending on the effectiveness of the treatment. However, some patients do not experience adequate improvement, so agents offering novel mechanisms are being sought.

According to a report released in 2011 by Japan's Health Sciences Council Committee on Measures Against Rheumatism and Allergic Disease, the number of people in Japan suffering from bronchial asthma has nearly doubled to more than eight million adults and children over the past 10 years. Although mortality is declining, more than 2,000 people, mainly elderly, still die from this condition every year, according to vital statistics of Japan 2010 published by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.