

Japanese group steps up efforts against COVID-19

On April 16th, the healthcare division of Japanese manufacturing group Kaneka Corporation announced it had reached an agreement with FUJIFILM Corporation to supply drug substances for anti-influenza drug, Avigan® Tablet (generic name: favipiravir), for COVID-19. Kazuhiko Fujii, Executive Vice President of Kaneka Corporation, additionally highlights the effort of their subsidiary in Belgium to provide solutions that help fight the COVID-19 outbreak. The University of Namur developed a method for novel coronavirus testing which uses the PCR reagent Takyon™, developed by Kaneka Eurogentec.

With origins dating back to the 1950s, Japan-based Kaneka today has global operations with chemicals, plastics, nutritionals among its core product groups. Its life sciences business unit focuses on both medical devices and pharmaceuticals. In the latter category, the company develops and manufactures small molecular pharmaceutical materials as well as an affinity chromatography resin for purification of monoclonal antibody (KANEKA KanCap™ series). In addition, the business unit offers products and services for biopharmaceuticals, and transdermal medicine. Since the 1970s, it has manufactured numerous specialty pharmaceutical ingredients such as chiral

compounds utilizing biotechnologies and synthesis technologies. In 2018, it installed a continuous flow system for commercial scale production.

In April, Kaneka became the major supplier to FUJIFILM Corporation for Avigan®. While COVID-19 continues to spread, the Japanese government has decided to increase its stockpiles of Avigan® Tablet, which is expected to be effective against COVID-19, for up to 2 million people, and FUJIFILM Corporation has expanded its production system and started increasing its production of Avigan® Tablet.

Kaneka commented that it has been highly commended by major

pharmaceutical manufacturers around the world for their process development capabilities, manufacturing technology, and quality of pharmaceuticals cultivated over many years, and on this occasion, it has been requested to supply drug substances as a major supplier. The company believes that it is their social mission to promptly start the supply of drug substances for Avigan® Tablet, and it will urgently improve its manufacturing system through capital investment, personnel allocation changes, and production plan adjustments to begin supplying the drug substances in July.

Kaneka has already started supplying PCR reagents used for COVID-19 tests via its group company Kaneka Eurogentec. “The Takyon™, qPCR reagent products from Kaneka Eurogentec have been designed to improve qPCR runs,” Mr. Fujii explains. “It includes an optimized reaction buffer for a better affinity to DNA, and the new Takyon™ fusion polymerase, and ensures sensitivity and delivery of accurate and reproducible results. The University of Namur developed a method for the novel coronavirus testing which uses the PCR reagent Takyon™. Kaneka Eurogentec has started supplying hospitals, testing organizations and research institutes with the PCR reagent Takyon™, for not only Belgium but also its neighbouring countries.”



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