



## **DNA Version Of Wei Jia Gets A Head Start**

### **CityU, HKU & LifeTec Jointly Conduct The Research**



### **ITF Granted LifeTec HK\$1.7m For Its Research On The Recombinant DNA Version Of Wei Jia**

[Hong Kong , March 4, 2003] LifeTec Group Limited (Stock code:1180, "LifeTec" or the "Group") today celebrated the approval of a grant a matching fund of HK\$1.7 million from the Innovation and Technology Fund ("ITF") of the Hong Kong SAR Government for its joint research project with the City University of Hong Kong ("CityU") and The University of Hong Kong ("HKU"). The research project (the "Project"), led by CityU and co-investigated by HKU, will focus on the development of the recombinant DNA version of Wei Jia. The Project has been scheduled to complete in July 2004 with results eligible for patent applications in the U.S., China, Europe and Japan. All intellectual property rights derived from the Project will solely belong to LifeTec. Under ITF's matching fund program, LifeTec will also invest an equal amount of HK\$1.7 million to support the Project.

The main objectives of the Project are to identify the active peptide from the current preparation of Wei Jia and to develop a recombinant DNA version of the drug. The key research areas of the Project are as follows:

- Protocols for purification of major peptide components from Wei Jia preparation;
- Amino acid sequences of the major peptide(s) in Wei Jia;
- A full-length cDNA clone of a peptide homologues to the peptide in Wei Jia;
- Protocols for the expression of the cloned peptide in either a bacterium or an eukaryotic host system; and
- Protocols for the purification of target peptide.

This Project will be conducted by a research team under the leadership of two professors - Prof. Michael M. Yang, Professor of Biology and Chemistry Department of CityU and former Director of the Applied Research Centre for Genomic Technology of CityU, and Prof. Hsiang-fu. Kung, Member of the Chinese

Academy of Sciences, Director and Chair Professor of Institute of Molecular biology (“IMB”) of HKU.

The grant given for the Project was approved under the Matching Grant ( 50/50 ) for Joint Research of ITF’s University-Industry Collaboration Programme. ITF is the fund administered by the Innovation and Technology Commission, which aims to increase the added value, productivity and competitiveness of Hong Kong economic activities. The Matching Grant for Joint Research intends to foster private companies to collaborate with universities in proprietary R&D projects. Researchers of the universities are the core project team members and conduct major parts of the R&D work of the projects.

Mr. Jay Chun, Chairman and Managing Director of the Group, stated, “Both City University of Hong Kong and The University of Hong Kong have very distinguished biotech talents and advanced research capabilities. Together with LifeTec’s R&D and clinical trial experience, the project will be highly successful in terms of technological innovation and product commercialization. This project would help accelerate our process of launching a new patent product in the international market.”

Mr. Chun continued, “LifeTec will benefit from the Project by way of the improvement on the quality of Wei Jia, the possible extension of Wei Jia’s therapeutic indication as well as its lifecycle in the market. Through the collaboration with Hong Kong’s first class scientists, the Project would have the potential to introduce a new therapy for nearly half a billion patients suffering from hepatitis and its complications.”

Mr. Chun concluded, “On behalf of the Group, I would like to express our greatest gratitude to ITF for the grant. I hope to see more grants approved by the ITF for biotech projects of other research institutions or biopharmaceutical enterprises in the future. This would greatly help to promote the development of the biotech sector in Hong Kong.”

*- The End -*

### **About LifeTec**

LifeTec is a Hong Kong listed company (stock code 1180) engaged in the development, manufacture and sale of innovative biopharmaceutical products based on original technology. LifeTec holds the administrative protection for the new generation hepatitis drug Wei Jia.

LifeTec's nationwide distribution network has over 70 sales offices covering all regions in China. Since the commercial launch of Wei Jia in mid 2001, the number of hospitals adopting Wei Jia has been soaring. Currently Wei Jia is adopted by over 500 hospitals and the number of user hospitals is expected to grow to 1,000 by end of 2003.

The new GMP compliant production line in Weihai, Shandong Province has commenced production in Aug 2002. The production line has an annual production capacity of 20 million vials of Wei Jia per annum.

In addition to liver drugs, LifeTec has acquired two new drug projects in Dec 2002, namely the augments for liver regeneration ("ALR") and new generation antiseptic Pazufloxacin. ALR is the revolutionary gene therapy for liver disease including liver cancer and cirrhosis. The Gene Therapy Research Center of the Institute of Infectious Diseases of The Peoples' Liberation Army is the technical partner in the ALR project.

### **About Wei Jia**

Wei Jia is a Category I drug approved by the State Drug Administration in China (equivalent to FDA in U.S.). As a Hepatocyte Growth Factors (hGF), Wei Jia stimulates the growth and regeneration of liver cells. The drug can also repair damaged liver cells and retard the development of liver cancer and cirrhosis. Wei Jia is applied in severe hepatitis treatment and is delivered through intravenous injection. It is highly efficacious with minor side effects.

### **Prof. Michael Yang**

Professor Yang is the Professor of Biology and Chemistry Department of the City University of Hong Kong. He was the Director of the Applied Research Centre for Genomic Technology ("ACGT") in City University of Hong Kong, who has over 15 years of experience in analytical chemistry, biochemistry, and molecular biology. He has published over 60 peer-reviewed papers, 70 technical presentations, and 10 China and U.S. patents.

### **Prof. Hsiang-Fu. Kung**

Professor Kung is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Director and Chair Professor of Institute of Molecular Biology ("IMB") of HKU. He has profound experience in drug discovery and development. Professor Kung has published over 200 peer-reviewed papers and was instrumental in the development of the first anti-hepatitis protein drug interferon-alpha. IMB has the technical capacity for DNA cloning and expression, and cell-based and animal-based functional assays.

### **Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF)**

ITF, administered by the Innovation and Technology Commission, aims to increase the added value, productivity and competitiveness of Hong Kong economic activities. Through the ITF, the Government hopes to encourage and assist Hong Kong companies to upgrade their technological level and introduce innovative ideas to their businesses

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