Asia News

HK company stocks up on face masks to fight swine flu pandemic

The Hong Kong-based biotech company Filligent announced the mobilisation of its anti-infective BioMask stocks to help combat the global spread of the H1N1 virus, also called swine flu. The mask, which was introduced to the public at the Asia Pacific Congress of Medical Virology in February 2009, is said to be the first medical face mask to kill viruses within seconds after contact, while retaining the breathability required by medical workers.

“Humanitarian organisations and governments are on the front line of containing infection, especially among children. We’re allocating our resources to respond to their needs,” said Filligent CEO Melissa Movbray-d’Arbela. She added that Bio-Mask was designed to withstand the rigours of pandemic logistics.

“We are working with retailers and humanitarian organisations to get the BioMask and our other anti-infective products out to the people as soon as possible,” Ms Movbray-d’Arbela said.

Filligent’s BioMask is based on an ‘intelligent filtration’ technology and fabricated from a tested multilayer material that has highly targeted antimicrobial properties. According to the company, this patented BioFriend textile layer captures pathogens by mimicking the sites on human cells to which they normally attach and destroys them by disrupting their surfaces and cell walls. Many viruses, including influenza viruses, are known to bind to a terminal sialic acid residue on the surface of the human cell membrane.

The new strain of the swine flu virus that swept through Mexico and other parts of the world has killed about 100 people worldwide, primarily in North America and Mexico. Latest data of the World Health Organization showed 15,598 people in 48 countries were confirmed to have caught the virus. India and Turkey have confirmed their first cases of swine flu and Japan has recorded its first domestic case of the illness. Meanwhile, the Turkish Health Ministry says an American flying from the United States via Amsterdam was found to be suffering symptoms of the virus after arriving at Istanbul Airport en route to Iraq.

Malaysia confirmed its second case of swine flu—a female student who was on the same flight as a 21-year-old man whom authorities a day earlier announced had tested positive.

The WHO has changed the current phase of pandemic alert to five, which is one step away from a global pandemic. In a press conference in May, Dr Keiji Fukuda, Assistant Director-General ad Interim for Health Security and Environment at WHO, said that despite all efforts to contain the outbreak, his organisation is expecting a large number of people to get infected worldwide.

“It would be a reasonable estimate to say that perhaps a third of the world’s population would get infected with this virus,” he said.
Aussie university receives budget for new Oral Health Centre

Daniel Zimmermann
DTI

LEIPZIG, Germany/BRISBANE, Australia: The Australian government has provided for a new US$79.2 million Oral Health Centre at the University of Queensland in Brisbane in Australia. It will bring together the University’s School of Dentistry and sections of Queensland Health’s Oral Health Services for treating about 17,000 dental and cancer patients each year and thereby meeting the national dentist shortage, University officials said. The Centre is scheduled for completion in 2012.

The University has hailed the decision announced last night in the Federal Budget, which will help build Australia’s largest and most advanced specialist oral health service and support up to 700 jobs in the construction, property, business, and manufacturing industries. The Centre will have up to 160 full-time equivalent staff and train an additional 20 dentists, as well as 15 oral health therapists each year. Students in these programmes will treat members of the public at the Oral Health Centre, under close supervision.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Paul Greenfield welcomed the announcement as the start of a new era in dental care and education for Queensland. He said that plans for a new School of Dentistry date back 20 years.

“The new centre will substantially expand and improve oral health facilities and services for patients, particularly cancer patients and others with complex dental care needs,” Prof. Greenfield added. “Patients will also benefit from research, which will target better treatment outcomes and prevention.”

Research is to be conducted in restorative dentistry, paediatrics, orthodontics, oral radiology, oral medicine, periodontology, endodontics, special needs dentistry and other specialist areas. The centre will also house the largest dental library in Australia.