Asia News

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

The Hong Kong-based bio-tech company Filigent 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 Filigent CEO Melissa Mowbray-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. Mowbray-d’Arbela said.

Filigent’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 de-stroys 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 15,358 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 from 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

By: 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 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, periodontics, orthodontics, oral radiology, oral medicine, peri-odontics, endodontics, special needs dentistry and other specialist areas. The centre will also house the largest dental library in Australia.

Open borders for Filipino dentists

Doctors and dentists from the Philippines will soon be able to practise in all member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), according to a new agreement recently signed by ASEAN education ministers in Phuket in Thailand. The agreement will make way for free movement of professional medical and dental labour from the Philippines to countries like Singapore, Indonesia or Vietnam. Currently, the Philippines has 8,500 dentists.

Similar arrangements have already been introduced by the ASEAN regarding architects, surveyors, engineers and nurses. In December 2006, for example, ASEAN economic ministers signed a mutual recognition agreement on nurses, which are amongst the Philippines’ major human resource exports. The new agreement on physicians and dentists will be effective in August this year.

Under the agreement, physicians and dentists from the Philippines can apply for recognition in another ASEAN country, if they have a valid professional licence from the host country’s Professional Regulation Commission or have been practising as a general medical practitioner or dentist in the host country for no less than five continuous years, Education Secretary of the Philippines Jesli A. Lagus said. He added that the agreement requires dentists to comply with requirements imposed by the host country and have pending administrative or criminal case in relation to the practice of their profession.

“We welcome these developments because these are concrete steps to realising a true ASEAN community that is inclusive, harmonious, and borderless and one that expands the opportunities for personal growth and development for our countrymen,” Lagus said. The ASEAN, with a combined market of about 550 million people, aims to have a single market by the year 2015, in order to be able to compete with other emerging markets in the region, such as China or India. The bloc has a combined gross regional product of US$1.1 trillion and total trade of about US$1.6 trillion.