

## **Pharmacogenomics becomes Standard in over 50 Hospitals throughout Taiwan through use of New Genetic Screening Kit**

***Tests designed to determine presence of HLA-B\*1502 allele can prevent patients from contracting Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS) and Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TENS)***

**Palo Alto, CA, USA – March 9, 2011** – Pharmigene, a leader in advancing personalized medicine and reducing severe adverse drug reactions through genetic-based diagnostic solutions, today announced a new milestone in the practice of pharmacogenomics and personalized medicine by partnering with over 50 hospitals across Taiwan.

Healthcare providers at these institutions in Taiwan are utilizing Pharmigene's genetic test used to detect the presence of a key human leukocyte antigen (HLA) allele, HLA-B\*1502, in individual patients being considered for treatment with the drug carbamazepine. Patients who possess the allele and are treated with carbamazepine have been linked to a higher risk of developing Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS) and TENS.

To prevent exposing these particular patients to the risks of these diseases, Pharmigene has developed a genetic test kit that physicians can utilize to identify patients who, when taking carbamazepine, have significantly higher risk in developing SJS/TENS. Taiwan has many thousands of new patients each year that are treated for epilepsy, trigeminal neuralgia, and bipolar disorder. Physicians have several choices of prescription drugs to treat these symptoms, but carbamazepine has the best efficacy and is the least expensive. By prescribing the HLA-B\*1502 genetic test that can identify these patients who are at risk, physicians can safely prescribe carbamazepine to over 90% of patients who are not carriers of the HLA-B\*1502 allele while prescribing an alternative drug to patients who are carriers of the high-risk allele.

The use of the companion diagnostics model, combining the use of genetic test kits plus carbamazepine or another alternate drug for treatment for the tens of thousands of new patients, could save over several billion dollars (U.S.) over the next 10 years. Taiwan's National Healthcare Insurance could then realize savings of close to \$1 billion U.S. annually after that timeframe.

"We believe that we are creating a new paradigm in the field of pharmacogenomics. By packaging genetic testing with generic drugs, we are making sure these drugs are used safely and in an efficacious manner," reported Dr. Luke Chen, CEO of Pharmigene. "While billions are spent in developing new drugs, we believe that billions more can be saved by extending the life of these generic drugs," he added.

**About Pharmigene**

Pharmigene's mission ([www.pharmigene.com](http://www.pharmigene.com)) is to improve personal health and advance personalized medicine by providing genetic-based diagnostic solutions that enable individuals to become more informed about their genetic makeup and allow them and their healthcare professionals to make better health decisions. Pharmigene was founded in 2005 with exclusive worldwide intellectual property rights related to warfarin sensitivity and other adverse drug reactions from Academia Sinica in Taiwan. Currently Pharmigene has offices in Palo Alto, California, as well as offices and a research and GMP/ISO manufacturing facility in Taiwan.

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