



# Lilly, Merck, And Pfizer Join Forces To Accelerate Research And Improve Treatment Of Lung And Gastric Cancers In Asia

Tuesday, February 23, 2010 - 12:27am

Publicly Available Genomic Database of Profiled Tumor Samples to Provide a Resource for Biomedical Researchers Worldwide

(BUSINESS WIRE)--Eli Lilly and Company, Merck (also known as Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) outside the USA and Canada), and Pfizer Inc. today announced the formation of the Asian Cancer Research Group, Inc., (ACRG), an independent, not-for-profit company established to accelerate research and ultimately improve treatment for patients affected with the most commonly-diagnosed cancers in Asia.

The ACRG's formation represents a prime example of a growing trend in pre-competitive collaboration in which large pharmaceutical companies combine their resources and expertise to rapidly increase knowledge of disease and disease processes. The goal of the ACRG is to improve the knowledge of cancers prevalent in Asia and to accelerate drug discovery efforts by freely sharing the resulting data with the scientific community.

"Through its work and the subsequent sharing of information, the ACRG hopes to empower researchers, foster innovation and improve the prognosis and treatment of patients with cancer," said Gary Gilliland, M.D., Ph.D., senior vice president and franchise head, Oncology, Merck Research Laboratories.

Initially, the ACRG will focus on lung and gastric cancers, two of the most common forms of cancer in Asia. As many as 40 percent of patients with lung cancer in Asia demonstrate a mutation that is relatively rare in Western patients (EGFR mutation).<sup>1</sup> This mutation has

resulted in differences in response to some types of agents, suggesting that a different research approach is needed for developing treatments for certain patient populations.

Gastric cancer has reached near epidemic proportions in some countries in Asia. Despite its relatively low incidence in the West, gastric cancer is the second largest cause of cancer death in the world, killing more than 630,000 patients per year, more people than all cancers combined in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

“Environmental and genetic factors are believed to underlie the dramatic differences in the molecular subtypes and incidence of cancers in Asia and other parts of the world,” said Neil Gibson, Ph.D., chief scientific officer of Pfizer’s Oncology Research Unit.

“Although some progress has been achieved in the last few years in understanding and treating these cancers, they remain a huge unmet need and a disproportionate health burden to Asian patients.”

Over the next two years, Lilly, Merck and Pfizer have committed to create one of the most extensive pharmacogenomic cancer databases known to date. This database will be composed of data from approximately 2,000 tissue samples from patients with lung and gastric cancer that will be made publicly available to researchers and, over time, further populated with clinical data from a longitudinal analysis of patients. Comparison of the contrasting genomic signatures of these cancers could inform new approaches to treatment.

Today’s announcement marks the formation of the ACRG. The company is currently focused on establishing collaborative relationships throughout Asia to collect the tissue samples and data. All tissue samples and data will be collected and shared in accordance with good medical practices and local laws.

Lilly has assumed responsibility for ultimately providing the data to the research public through an open-source concept managed by Lilly’s Singapore research site. Moreover, Lilly, Merck and Pfizer will each provide technical and intellectual expertise.

“The ACRG is about sharing information for the common good,” said Kerry Blanchard, M.D., Ph.D., vice president and leader of drug development in China for Lilly and who represented Lilly in the ACRG’s formation. “This company will aid researchers around the world to develop diagnostics, tailor current treatments and develop novel therapies to improve outcomes for affected patients with lung, gastric and perhaps other forms of cancer.”

About Eli Lilly and Company

Eli Lilly and Company, a leading innovation-driven company, is developing a growing portfolio of pharmaceutical products by applying the latest research from its own worldwide laboratories and from collaborations with eminent scientific organizations. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind., Lilly provides answers - through medicines and information - for some of the world's most urgent medical needs. Information about Lilly is available at [www.lilly.com](http://www.lilly.com).

#### About Merck

Today's Merck is working to help the world be well. Through our medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and consumer and animal products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to health care through far-reaching programs that donate and deliver our products to the people who need them. Merck. Be Well. For more information, visit [www.merck.com](http://www.merck.com).

#### About Pfizer

Pfizer is the world's premier biopharmaceutical company. We discover, develop, manufacture and deliver quality, safe and effective medicines to treat and help prevent disease for both people and animals. We also partner with healthcare providers, governments and local communities to expand access to our medicines and to provide better quality health care and health system support. At Pfizer, colleagues around the world work every day to help people stay happier and healthier longer and to reduce the human and economic burden of disease worldwide. For more information, visit [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com).

#### Forward-looking statement

This news release includes "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Such statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the managements of Merck, Pfizer and Lilly, and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. Actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

The companies undertake no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause their results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in their most recent Forms 10-K and 10-Q and

each company's other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC's Internet site ([www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov)).

1 Herbst, RS et al., (2008) N Engl J Med 359, 13, 1367-1380

2 Parkin, DM et al., (2005) CA Cancer J Clin 55, 2, 74-108.

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/cgi-bin/mmg.cgi?eid=6188199&lang=en>

## **Multimedia Files:**

Download All Files

Download:

Download Thumbnail (19.3 KB)

Download Web Ready (43.44 KB)

Download ViewImage (27.88 KB)

Download:

Download Web Ready (21.8 KB)

Download Thumbnail (14.11 KB)

Download ViewImage (18.87 KB)

Pfizer Liz Power, 860-732-4987 [Elizabeth.Power@pfizer.com](mailto:Elizabeth.Power@pfizer.com) or Merck Ian McConnell, 908-423-3046 [Ian\\_McConnell@merck.com](mailto:Ian_McConnell@merck.com) or Eli Lilly and Company Judy Kay Moore, 317-277-6265 [Moore\\_Judy\\_K@lilly.com](mailto:Moore_Judy_K@lilly.com)