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Trader's Choice: **Hope for Millions**



Dan Miller, President and CEO of Excorp Medical

United States-based Excorp Medical is raising the hopes of millions with the bio-artificial liver system it invented in association with the University of Pittsburgh. It says there is no better place than Hong Kong to bring the technology to market. The firm's R&D project at the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks' Biotech Centre is a world first.

"Except for liver transplantation, our work is the first major advance in 100 years in the care of patients with liver failure," said Dan Miller, President and CEO of Excorp. "At the moment, there are no approved products of this type anywhere. Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland will lead the way."

Mr Miller explained that the bio-artificial liver system is intended for the short-term metabolic support of patients with acute and progressive liver failure, irrespective of the underlying cause. "The goal of the therapy for a few patients will be a bridge to a liver transplant. For many more, it will be a means to take advantage of the liver's extraordinary ability to regenerate after severe injury, including surgery."

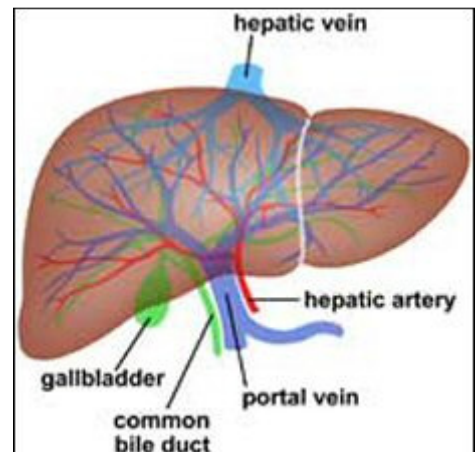
Each patient might receive one to three liver-assist procedures during a given medical episode over the course of 10 days. A procedure lasts about 12 hours, during which the bio-artificial liver system will process the patient's entire blood volume 30 to 40 times.

World First

Excorp's Hong Kong set-up will be the first anywhere to offer safe and effective bio-artificial liver therapy for these patients.

"The liver is the only major organ in the body that has no artificial bio-engineered support technology," Mr Miller said, citing pacemakers, kidney dialysis, artificial respiration, heart-lung machines, artificial knees and hips as examples.

The company chose Hong Kong for a number of reasons, but demand for such treatment ranked high. Mr Miller explained that while there are nearly 100 different causes of liver failure, the numbers of patients in Asia are far greater on a per-capita basis, driven largely by the prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infection. "On the mainland, for example, 60 per cent of the population has been exposed to hepatitis B at some point in their lives. As a result there are 150 million people chronically infected and one million deaths annually."



The liver, a complex biochemical factory, can regenerate even after more than 80 per cent is damaged through disease



The Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks “provides a superb environment” for Excorp’s plan to bring its technology to market

are robust and favourable for the sort of business development we have in mind.

He added that Hong Kong Science and Technology Park “provides a superb environment” for the type of operation Excorp Medical (HK) Ltd plans to establish.

CEPA Advantage

“Proximity to China is another feature, and we intend to take advantage of CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement) between China and Hong Kong to facilitate the evolution of the business.” He also cited support from InvestHK and the Innovation Technology Commission.

Mr Miller said the technology is likely about 18 months away from market. “In its earliest forms, the bio-artificial liver system will be used in a hospital critical-care setting. As time goes on, and the costs are reduced, we would expect it to be used in more routine medical care. This is typical for new medical technology.”

Excorp’s initial Hong Kong operation will have the capacity to manufacture enough product to support at least 1,000 patients annually – “a tiny fraction of the available market in South Asia.”

Related link

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"Hope For Millions" appeared in the October 14, 2009 issue of *Hong Kong Trader*, a Hong Kong Trade Development Council publication. For more information, please visit:

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