

Dec. 8, 2021

JIPA/JPMA opinion on Patents and Health at the 33rd WIPO SCP

Thank you Mr./Ms. Chair.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide a statement on behalf of the Japanese Intellectual Property Association (JIPA), which comprises over 970 major Japanese companies as members. JIPA makes this statement in collaboration with Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (JPMA), which comprises 73 leading R&D-oriented pharmaceutical companies. This statement is also supported by IFPMA.

Since the first report of an infection caused by a new coronavirus, later called COVID-19, in December 2019, people around the world have been suffering by the virus, but, thanks to the long-term efforts of people involved in drug discovery worldwide and the efforts of more than 300 alliances, according to Airfinity data, among pharmaceutical companies in the last 2 years, several types of COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at an unprecedented speed, which have saved billions of lives globally, and, pursuant to IFPMA, more than 24 billion vaccines are expected to be produced by June of next year.

However, we would not have been able to achieve these development and production goals without the strong global IP system that is in place, including 1) technology exploitation based on patent incentives, such as highly efficient expression of proteins, reduction of inflammatory reactions caused by mRNA, and reduction of high production cost of mRNA by modifying its capping structure and uridine, and highly efficient delivery of mRNA to cells by stabilizing unstable mRNA in vivo by using lipid nanoparticle technology, those of which are protected by patents, and 2) patent-based alliances and technology transfers among the companies including Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Novavax. By working together further, we will be able to bring these cutting-edge medicines to people all over the world through promoting innovations by mining inventions, and utilizing patent protection systems and appropriate licenses.

We would like to introduce examples of Japanese companies' initiatives related to COVID-19. Those development candidates and products below were/are protected by patent rights.

FUJIFILM Toyama Chemical is a Japanese pharmaceutical company which developed Favipiravir as an antiviral medication used to treat influenza in Japan. Favipiravir is expected to become a useful drug for the treatment of COVID-19 and the clinical trials are ongoing. It has started to collaborate with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd, Global Response Aid, and Carelink to supply this drug rapidly and efficiently.

Bonac Corporation is a biotechnology company focused on R&D and commercialization of nucleic acid medicines. Using its proprietary RNA interference technology, the company has successfully developed a therapeutic drug candidate that directly degrades the genetic RNA of COVID-19 in collaboration with the Fukuoka Institute of Health and Environmental Sciences. Bonac will start to conduct clinical trials based on the lead compounds.

PHC Holdings Corporation develops, manufactures and sells healthcare devices and services including ultracold freezers used not only for COVID-19 vaccine storage, but to assist with COVID-19 research and clinical testing.

As introduced above, Japanese companies work actively in order to solve the problems of global access to medicines.

We strongly believe that IP is an incentive for those inventions, the IP protection and appropriate voluntary licensing accelerate the development of those candidates and products, and as a results, our activities are contributing to improving global health.

Thank you Mr./Ms. Chair

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