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KANEKA CORPORATION

Kaneka Accelerates Development of Therapeutic Drugs for Treating COVID-19

Kaneka Corporation (Headquarters: Minato-ku, Tokyo; President: Minoru Tanaka) and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases have been promoting a joint project on “development of virus-neutralizing antibodies for the treatment of novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19)”. We are accelerating this joint project with the financial support from the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED)*¹ as a COVID-19 therapeutic drug development program.

The therapeutic drugs and vaccines for treating COVID-19 are being rapidly developed in the world. We plan to develop the neutralizing antibodies against the novel coronavirus and its mutants by using “*in vitro* Immunization System” *² that was established in collaboration with Tokyo University of Science. We aim to start the clinical trials with the pharmaceutical companies in FY2021.

For COVID-19, we are reinforcing our production of the drug substances for Avigan® Tablet and Kaneka Eurogentec (Headquarters: Belgium) is stepping up the manufacturing and supply of PCR reagents in response to as per requested by the Belgian government. We have already established a manufacturing system for mRNA*³ and plasmid DNA*⁴, which are expected to early practical use as vaccines.

We will offer multifaceted solutions that use these innovative technologies to combat infectious diseases.

*1. AMED is a National Research and Development Agency under the jurisdiction of the Cabinet Office. It performs and provides assistance with research and development in the medical field, as well as the preparation of environments for conducting this research and development, based on strategies defined by the national government.

*2. A unique technology *in vitro* that mimics a part of the human immune system. This technology allows us to acquire the antibodies by enriching antigen-specific B-cells in human blood. By using this technology, it is possible to develop the neutralizing antibodies against the novel coronavirus and its mutants, from the blood of COVID-19 patients. This research was partially supported by AMED under Grant Number JP16im0110422.

*3. An RNA molecule that is transcribed genetic information of protein synthesis from DNA. It is expected to be used as vaccines and therapeutics.

*4. A general term for circular DNA molecules that exist outside the nucleus of bacteria such as *E. coli* and yeast, and that are passed down to daughter cells through cell division. It has been applied to genetic medicines and vaccines in recent years.