

Astellas, Merck enter co-promotion deal in Japan

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Singapore: Astellas Pharma and MSD KK, the Japan unit of US pharma giant Merck, have entered into a co-promotion agreement for ipragliflozin L-proline, a SGLT2 inhibitor, in Japan. Earlier this year, Astellas had filed an application for approval of ipragliflozin for the treatment of type 2 diabetes in Japan.

Astellas will manufacture and sell ipragliflozin. Under the agreement, MSD will co-promote ipragliflozin with Astellas and Kotobuki Pharmaceutical.

Ipragliflozin is a selective SGLT2 (sodium-glucose co-transporter 2) inhibitor discovered through research collaboration between Astellas and Kotobuki Pharmaceutical. SGLTs are membrane proteins that exist on the cell surface and transfer glucose into cells. SGLT2 is one of the subtypes of the sodium-glucose co-transporters and plays a key role in the reuptake of glucose in the proximal tubule of the kidneys. Ipragliflozin reduces blood glucose levels by inhibiting the reuptake of glucose by selectively inhibiting SGLT2.

Both MSD, through its DPP-4 inhibitor Januvia tablet, and Astellas, through its fast-acting hypoglycemic agent Starsis tablet, have significant experience in the diabetes market. Astellas and MSD are committed to make further contributions through co-promotion of ipragliflozin which is expected to be a new option for the treatment of type 2 diabetes.