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GI-Cell, IVI ink MOU to develop next-generation COVID-19 vaccine

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GI-Cell aims to prioritize supplying to Korea and developing countries by developing a vaccine that accommodates mass supply, viral mutation response, safety, convenience of patients



GI-Cell, an affiliate of GI-Innovation, a biotechnology company for cell therapy development, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) to develop a COVID-19 vaccine candidate.

An MOU signing ceremony was held at IVI headquarters on January 25 with Dr. Myoung-ho Jang, Chairman of GI Group, and Dr. Chun-pyo Hong, CEO of GI-Cell, as well as IVI's Director General Dr. Jerome Kim, and Deputy Director General of Science Dr. Manki Song in attendance. Under this agreement, GI-Cell will work with IVI on the clinical development of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate.

Currently, GI-Cell is developing a COVID-19 vaccine GIC-1114/1114m using GI-COV-VAX, its proprietary protein vaccine development platform. GIC-1114/1114m can not only generate neutralizing antibodies but also induce T-cell responses against SARS-CoV-2 that will hopefully provide better protection against future mutant COVID-19 viruses and is designed to significantly increase the duration of protection. A monkey experiment has confirmed that a single dose induces neutralizing antibody and T-cell responses, which is considered advantageous compared to other products in terms of public health benefit, convenience, side-effects and cost.

In particular, with the aim of receiving approval on Phase 1/2 clinical trial in the second half of this year, GIC-1114/1114m will be formulated as multivalent subunit vaccine, a method that is relatively safe and easier to store than other COVID-19 vaccine development techniques.

"As a next-generation vaccine combining two antigens, we hope that GI-Cell's COVID-19 vaccine will be able to address various mutations and mutants. We also hope to overcome the polarization of vaccine supply around the world by producing enough vaccine for 2 billion people," said Dr. Myoung-ho Jang, Chairman of GI Group and the vaccine's discoverer. "Through joint research and clinical development with talented researchers at IVI, we will successfully develop a safe and effective vaccine for humanity."

Meanwhile, GI-Innovation, GI-Cell's parent company that exchanged an MOU with IVI in April last year, is actively conducting R&D activities to develop a COVID-19 vaccine adjuvant based on bilateral collaboration.