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Singapore: Sucampo Pharmaceuticals and Abbott have launched Amitiza (lubiprostone) in Japan, a prescription medicine for the treatment of chronic constipation not caused by organic diseases. Amitiza was approved by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) in Japan in June.

Abbott will promote and distribute Amitiza in Japan under the terms of the 2009 license, commercialization and supply agreement with Sucampo.

"Millions of patients in Japan have been suffering from chronic constipation, without efficacious and well-tolerated, long-term treatment options. We are pleased to bring Amitiza's experience of six years and over six million prescriptions in the US to the Japanese market, to benefit the healthcare providers and patients who need it," said Dr Ryuji Ueno, chairman and CEO, Sucampo.

According to MHLW epidemiology data, millions of people in Japan live with the pain and discomfort of chronic constipation. Medical attention could mean early diagnosis and effective, long-term treatment.

"Chronic constipation is a medical condition affecting several million people in Japan and is one of the most common digestive condition complaints. Healthcare providers will now have a prescription option to help treat this condition more effectively and longer term, compared to currently approved over-the-counter medications," said Mr Akihiko Honda, general manager, Abbott Japan.

Amitiza may significantly advance the treatment of chronic constipation and will be the only prescription option available in Japan for this condition. The medicine is the world's first chloride channel activator approved for therapeutic use, and has a unique mode of action that induces natural bowel movement frequency that is more in line with normal bowel habits.