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## **Chongqing Holley, Sigma-Tau, Medicines For Malaria Venture and University of Oxford Sign Historic Partnership Agreement To Develop Antimalarial Drug**

### ***New Drug Could be Among the Very Few Ever Developed Principally For the Poor***

**CHONGQING, China; GENEVA, Switzerland; ROME, Italy; 19 March 2004** – Today, Chongqing Holley Holding, a Chinese pharmaceutical company, Sigma-Tau, an Italian pharmaceutical company, Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), a nonprofit organization and University of Oxford signed an agreement for the international development of Dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine (Artekin®). If successful, this antimalarial drug will be one of the few drugs in history developed primarily for a disease of the poor.

Malaria, a disease that is widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, is making a major come back. Last decade, nearly twice as many people died of the disease than the decade before - amounting to more than one million deaths per year. The majority of the victims are children under five and pregnant women in Africa. Beyond the extraordinary human toll, malaria is also closely linked to poverty. Endemic in Africa, the disease costs an estimate \$12 billion a year in lost GDP and consumes around 40 percent of public health spending.

“Malaria mortality and morbidity are on the rise due to the growing problem of drug resistance. We desperately need to replenish the diminishing pipeline of effective and affordable medicines,” said Dr. Christopher Hentschel, CEO of MMV. “Not only should this antimalarial be effective, our goal is also to be able to make it available at a cost that’s affordable for people living on less than a dollar a day. We are confident that this partnership has what it takes to produce a new drug that could be a major weapon against the disease.”

Representing a new generation of antimalarial drug, Artekin® is a fixed dose combination drug made up of dihydroartemisinin, a derivative of artemisinin, and piperaquine. Artemisinin is extracted from *Artemisia* herb, a traditional medicine with a 2000-year history. It is especially potent against malaria as it acts very quickly without the side effects of many other antimalarials. In addition, there are no known cases of resistance to artemisinin so far. A combination drug further reduces the chances of resistance and improves its efficacy.

“With the new development plan being supported by internationally reputed experts, we will be able to confirm Artekin’s efficacy and safety,” Said Dr. Kevin Mak, Executive Vice President of Chongqing Holley. “We are very proud to have this important ancient Chinese drug recognized by the world and we are honored to be carrying on the historical cause with the development of the drug to an accepted international standard for worldwide use to cure malaria.”

“ We are looking at this very important and ethically relevant project as an opportunity to contribute with our know-how to the registration of Artekin® at the international and European level”, said Dr. Paolo Carminati, R&D Director of the Sigma-Tau Group. “We are grateful to the Italian Health Authorities, who have already shown significant interest.”

“In the field, we have hands-on experience that artemisinin-based therapies are extremely effective in treating malaria.” stated Prof. Nick White from the University of Oxford. “We need to put Artekin on the fast-track for clinical trials and development. If all goes to plan, this partnership will be able to quickly deliver a major antimalarial drug to the world’s poorest and most disenfranchised people.”

### **About Chongqing Holley Holding**

Chongqing Holley is a multi-sector corporation based in China with various business segments including several pharmaceutical manufacturing and marketing companies. It has succeeded in establishing the largest national, perhaps worldwide, artemisinin asset chain located in Wuling Mountain in Chongqing, China. Through years of diligent resource planning, the chain now includes cultivation and planting in conformity with GAP standards, extraction, manufacturing, R&D and international sales network.

### **About MMV**

Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) was officially launched on 3 November 1999 as a nonprofit foundation dedicated to reducing the burden of malaria in disease endemic countries by discovering, developing and delivering new affordable antimalarials through effective public-private partnership. After four years of operation, MMV is supporting and managing the largest portfolio of malaria research in history with 21 Projects in different stages of drug research and development. For further information please consult <http://www.mmv.org>.

### **About University of Oxford**

Oxford is one of Europe's most innovative and entrepreneurial universities. Drawing on an 800-year tradition of discovery and invention, modern Oxford is a world leader in clinical research on malaria through its work in Asia and Africa. These programmes, located in Thailand (Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University), Kenya (KEMRI Centre Kilifi) and Vietnam (Hospital for Tropical Diseases), supported by the Wellcome Trust biomedical research charity, have pioneered the use of artemisinin-based combinations for the treatment of drug resistant falciparum malaria.

### **About Sigma-Tau**

Sigma-Tau is a leading research-based Italian pharmaceutical company with annual revenues in excess of \$700 million and over 2200 employees worldwide. Therapeutic areas in which the company's research and development are focused include oncology, neurology, cardiovascular, gastroenterology, metabolism, immunology and infectious diseases. Sigma-Tau has operating subsidiaries throughout Europe and U.S and maintains a presence in all of the world's major pharmaceutical markets. Sigma-Tau has been operating in Africa through Sigma-Tau Sudan Ltd since 1982.

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