

New plant for Sepacell™ leukocyte reduction filters

Asahi Kasei Medical Co., Ltd. will construct a new plant for production of Sepacell™ leukocyte reduction filters, raising production capacity to 20 million filters per year upon completion in December 2008.

Sepacell™ leukocyte reduction filters are used at blood centers to remove leukocytes, or white blood cells, from collected blood and blood products for transfusion. Developed by Asahi Kasei Medical, Sepacell™ filters are made using ultrafine fibers from Asahi Kasei Fibers Corp., and the product lineup includes filters for whole blood, for red cell concentrates, and for platelet concentrates. Widely used in Japan and throughout the world, Sepacell™ filters are the world's leading leukocyte reduction filters, recognized for their outstanding leukocyte reduction performance and high rates of recovery of red blood cells and blood platelets.

As leukocytes in transfused blood can cause adverse side effects, leukocyte reduction to heighten the safety of transfusion has become standard procedure in most advanced countries. In January 2007 the Japanese Red Cross Society instituted a program of leukocyte reduction for all collected blood. The use of leukocyte reduction is increasing in many countries throughout Asia and other regions around the world. The additional production capacity obtained with the new plant will enable Asahi Kasei Medical to meet increased worldwide demand with a stable supply infrastructure for high-quality, high-performance Sepacell™ filters, and further expansions of capacity will be made as demand continues to grow.

Adverse side effects attributable to leukocytes in transfusion include nonhemolytic febrile transfusion reaction (NHFTTR) in which a patient experiences headache, chills, or fever immediately after transfusion, platelet transfusion refractoriness (PTR) in which a patient's platelet count fails to rise as much as expected after a platelet transfusion, and leukocyte-associated transmission of viruses such as cytomegalovirus (CMV) and adult T-cell leukemia virus (ATLV). It has also been shown that leukocyte reduction can effectively suppress transmission of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) prions during transfusion.

Overview of the new plant

Site: Oita, Japan (adjacent to existing Sepacell™ plant)

Capacity: 4 million filters/year (raising total to 20 million filters/year)

Investment: ≈¥1.2 billion

Groundbreaking: March 2008

Completion: December 2008

Corporate profile of Asahi Kasei Medical Co., Ltd.

President: Yasuyuki Yoshida

Establishment: October 2007*

Paid-in capital: ¥200 million

Shareholding: 100% by Asahi Kasei Pharma

Head office: Tokyo, Japan

Business line: Development, production, and sale of Sepacell™ leukocyte reduction filters for transfusion and Planova™ virus removal filters

Production facilities:

Oita – Sepacell™ plant

Nobeoka – Planova™ hollow-fiber membrane spinning plant, Planova™ filter module assembly plant

Employees: ≈400 (as of Oct. 31, 2007)

* Sepacell™ and Planova™ businesses separated from the former Asahi Kasei Medical Co., Ltd. at the time of its reorganization to focus on hemodialysis and therapeutic apheresis products with the company name changed to Asahi Kasei Kuraray Medical Co., Ltd.