

MEDIA RELEASE

Cordlife launches OptiQ: A first-of-its-kind corneal lenticule banking service in Singapore

- Cordlife has received a license from the Ministry of Health Singapore, permitting the Company to offer OptiQ, a corneal lenticule banking service in Singapore.
- Cordlife is the first company in Asia to offer corneal lenticule banking service to let myopic and astigmatic patients undergoing certain refractive eye surgery using lenticule extraction method (e.g. SMILE), cryopreserve their lenticules for potential future use.
- Although yet to be accepted as the standard of clinical care currently, early studies have shown that corneal lenticules may help correct presbyopia, hyperopia and certain ocular conditions.
- The technology behind OptiQ was invented by Singapore Eye Research Institute (“SERI”) and patented by Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd (“Singhealth”) and Cordlife is the exclusive license holder of this patent.

SINGAPORE, 3 March 2021 -- Cordlife Group Limited (“Cordlife” or the “Company” and together with its subsidiaries, the “Group”), a Singapore Exchange mainboard listed consumer healthcare company announced today that the Ministry of Health has issued a license permitting the Company to launch OptiQ, a corneal lenticule banking service in Singapore. Cordlife is the first company in Asia to let patients undergoing certain refractive eye surgery using lenticule extraction method (e.g. SMILE) for myopia or astigmatism, cryopreserve their corneal lenticules for potential treatment of presbyopia and other ocular conditions in the future.

The technology behind OptiQ was invented by Professors Donald Tan and Jodhbir Mehta from Singapore Eye Research Institute (“SERI”), the research arm of Singapore National Eye Centre (“SNEC”). SERI is one of the key public healthcare facilities for eye surgeries and treatments. The institute also plays a pivotal role in formulating national community health programmes. The expertise to store and re-implant a person’s corneal lenticule was developed by SERI and patented by Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd (“Singhealth”). This research is supported by the Singapore National Research Foundation under its Translational and Clinical Research (TCR) Flagship Programme and administered by the Singapore Ministry of Health’s National Medical Research Council.

Ms Tan Poh Lan, Cordlife’s Group Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, said: “Cordlife has accumulated 20 years of experience in the banking of biological materials so offering the storage of corneal lenticules is a natural extension of our services. Our partnership with SERI fits perfectly with our commitment to providing innovative healthcare services.”



“We are pleased to leverage Cordlife’s technical and marketing expertise in biological tissue and stem cell storage as we anticipate significant utility of cryopreserved corneal lenticules,” said Professor Tan at SERI.

Myopia is an extremely common refractive error in Singapore with 82 percent of the 20-year-olds suffering from this condition – one of the highest in East Asia. According to a systematic review conducted by researchers from Sydney-based Brien Holden Vision Institute, nearly half of the world is expected to be affected by 2050, a drastic increase from the 28 percent in 2010. This phenomenon is driven by modern lifestyle changes such as lesser time spent outdoors and the consistent use of mobile devices and computers. In the last 20 years alone, SNEC has performed over 73,000 laser refractive *surgery procedures*.

There are several refractive surgery options available for the treatment of myopia, including newer flapless refractive surgical procedures, such as SMILE. Unlike LASIK, which requires the creation of a flap to enable the laser to reshape the cornea, SMILE can correct myopia or astigmatism by extracting a tiny lenticule from each eye of the patient using a femtosecond laser. Presently, corneal lenticules extracted during such surgeries are routinely thrown away. Early animal and human studies have shown that corneal lenticules may help to correct presbyopia and hyperopia (long-sightedness) as well as certain ocular conditions.

Presbyopia in particular, is an age-related condition in which the eyes gradually lose the ability to focus on objects clearly at close range. Currently, this condition is corrected with the use of reading glasses or contact lenses. Patients can also opt for artificial inlay implantation but this method carries risks such as corneal inflammation, scarring and haze. By implanting biological materials such as corneal lenticule, such risks can be reduced and the rate of rejection will also be marginal due to inherent superior biocompatibility. Once lenticule implantation is approved as a standard of care, patients who have stored their own lenticules will have additional vision correction options.

“Almost every one of us will have presbyopia after the age of 40. We believe this advancement in ophthalmology can help a lot of people and even bring healthcare in Singapore to the next level,” Professor Mehta of SERI added.

Ms Audrey Lok, Director, Healthcare & Biomedical at ESG, said: “Singapore’s sustained investments in research and development over the years has made it an ideal location in Asia for companies to innovate and develop new product and service offerings. The partnership between SERI and Cordlife is an example of how enterprises and research institutions can collaborate to commercialise greenfield technologies, and make it more accessible to the wider region.”

Ms Tan added, “Along with the rising prevalence of myopia, we believe rising disposable income as well as increasing health consciousness among the general population, will help drive the demand for OptiQ. We are excited to be a part of this medical revolution to help patients preserve their corneal lenticules for potential use in the future.”





OptiQ is now available at SNEC and some eye clinics offering refractive eye surgery using lenticule extraction method in Singapore.

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ABOUT CORDLIFE GROUP LIMITED

Established in May 2001, Cordlife Group Limited (“Cordlife”, together with its subsidiaries, the “Group”) is a leading company dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of mother and child. The Group is listed on the Mainboard of the Singapore Exchange in 2012 and a pioneer in private cord blood banking in Asia.

Cordlife owns the largest network of cord blood banks in Asia with full stem cell banking facilities in six key markets namely Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Malaysia and the Philippines. In Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia, Cordlife operates the largest private cord blood banks; and is amongst the top three market leaders in India and Malaysia. In January 2018, Cordlife became the market leader in Hong Kong with the acquisition of the largest private cord blood bank in the country, Healthbaby Biotech (Hong Kong) Co., Limited. Through its majority-owned subsidiary in Malaysia, Stemlife Berhad, Cordlife holds indirect stake in Thailand’s largest private cord blood bank, Thai Stemlife. Through its marketing agents, Cordlife also expanded its presence to Myanmar and Vietnam in 2017 as well as Bangladesh in 2019.

Beyond cord blood and cord lining banking, Cordlife offers a comprehensive suite of diagnostics services for the family including urine-based newborn metabolic screening, non-invasive prenatal testing, paediatric vision screening and family genetic screening services.

Quality and customer focus are amongst some of the cornerstones of Cordlife. All of the Group’s facilities are accredited by AABB, the organisation behind the world’s gold standard for cord blood banking. In addition, Cordlife Singapore and Healthbaby are also two of the four cord blood banks in Asia, and eight in the world, to be accredited by both AABB and FACT, another world-class accreditation body for cord blood banks globally. In the area of clinical diagnostics, Cordlife India, Cordlife Hong Kong and Healthbaby are accredited by the College of American Pathologists (“CAP”). These quality achievements underpin the Group’s commitment to providing reliable healthcare solutions through innovation and technological advancement. For more information, visit <http://cordlife.listedcompany.com>

ABOUT SINGAPORE EYE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Established in 1997, the Singapore Eye Research Institute (SERI) is Singapore’s national research institute for ophthalmic and vision research. It is the research arm of the Singapore National Eye Centre, and affiliated to the National University of Singapore and the Duke-NUS Medical School. In



two decades, SERI has grown from a team of 5 to over 250 staff, encompassing clinician scientists, scientists, fellows, students, support staff, as well as more than 241 distinguished adjunct faculty members to become the largest eye research institute in the Asia-Pacific region. As of Dec 2020, SERI has published 4,236 peer-reviewed papers in competitive research grants. SERI has trained more than 210 current and past graduate students; and has been conferred over 658 national & international awards and 140 patents. SERI further undertakes eye research in collaboration with local & international ophthalmic medical centres and research institutions, which has ensured a high level of research competency & skills transfer. Notably, SERI's research has translated to actual patient success stories & significant improvements in eye care delivery. Today, SERI is recognized as a pioneering center for high quality eye research in Asia, with breakthrough discoveries that has translated to significant paradigm shift in eye care delivery.

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