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Press Release

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UCB: INAUGURATION OF NEW *KEPPRA* PRODUCTION UNIT

This Friday 3 December 2004, at the invitation of Georges Jacobs, Chairman of the Executive Committee of UCB, and of Roch Doliveux, Director-General of UCB Pharma, H.R.H. Prince Philippe of Belgium inaugurated the new production unit for the Keppra antiepileptic drug at Braine-l'Alleud in the presence of Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe, Minister-President of the Walloon Region.

This new production installation has been made necessary by growing demand for *Keppra*, the new jewel in the UCB Pharma crown. This unit represents an investment of € 30 million and creates 120 new jobs. Over the past 25 years, UCB Pharma has seen its ordinary profit rise from € 10 million to € 402 million in 2003 and the workforce at its Braine-l'Alleud facilities, from 200 to 2200 employees. Since the creation of the site till today, UCB has invested in Braine € 350 million.

Unique technology

The new installation operates fully to GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) standards, an area in which UCB played a pioneering role with its first GMP facility at Braine back in 1996. The new plant applies a totally unique manufacturing technology, based on the principle of continuous chiral chromatographic separation. This is based on the fact that certain molecules, like that of *Keppra*, can exist in a right-hand and left-hand configuration. As the two configurations are not equivalent, and since the pharmaceutical industry is increasingly required to place only enantiomerically pure products on the market, the inactive configuration is removed during production.

The new installation is the largest GMP unit of its type in the world.

Keppra production

Production capacity at the newly inaugurated plant is 150 tonnes a year, on top of the 80 tonnes already produced at the UCB site at Bulle, Switzerland. The new unit employs 170 people in all. Researchers from the separation and purification centre provide back-up research to the chemical research undertaken on site and another team has helped identify and develop the industrial processes. This technology calls for special training. UCB prepares its own high level chemists, who need 12 to 18 months' training to master the process and the equipment.

World-wide development of Keppra

Keppra's success is such that existing plants have had to be adapted to meet growing world demand. Today over 95% of *Keppra* production is exported to 140 countries. The needs of the entire American market are met by Belgium alone. This requires the local facilities to comply with stringent Food and Drug Administration standards.

Braine-l'Alleud is also home to UCB's worldwide expertise centre for the central nervous system where the successors to *Keppra* are being developed. Two promising compounds are already at an advanced stage of development in the clinical studies.

A pro-environment site

Since 1991 UCB has been committed to the Responsible Care programme which closely relates economic profit to respect for people and the environment. The *Keppra* manufacturing process, based on multicolumn chromatography technology, illustrates the constant attention paid to the problem of waste production. Industrial scale application of this technology cuts waste by 55%, improves production yield and reduces the quantity of solvents used.

About UCB Pharma

UCB Pharma is part of the UCB Group, a global pharmaceutical and specialty chemical company with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. UCB Pharma is a global biopharma leader, specialising in the fields of central nervous system disorders, allergy and respiratory disease, immune and inflammatory disorders and oncology. UCB Pharma's key products are Keppra® (antiepileptic), Xyzal® and Zyrtec® (antiallergics), Nootropil® (cerebral function regulator), and Tussionex® (antitussive). UCB Pharma employs over 8,000 people operating in over 100 countries and, in 2003, achieved sales of €1.5 billion.

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