Press release

Essilor establishes a Joint Research Center in China with Wenzhou Medical University to investigate the progression of myopia

Charenton-le-Pont, France (13 June 2013) – To strengthen research on myopia, Essilor International and the Wenzhou Medical University, in China, have launched a research platform: the Wenzhou Medical University-Essilor International Research Center (WEIRC).

This long term partnership aims to create a research platform in the field of vision science. It will focus as a first step on myopia in children: its etiology, its epidemiology and the means, mostly based on ophthalmic lenses, to control its progression. Research activities will be conducted in a dedicated premise in the Eye Hospital of Wenzhou Medical University, one of the leading Chinese research institutes for vision science and ophthalmology, located in the Zhejiang province.

Essilor’s long term involvement in research

“Partnering with leading research organizations throughout the world is a key lever of Essilor’s research and innovation strategy” explains Eric Perrier, Vice-President Worldwide R&D at Essilor. “Considering the impact of myopia on people’s lives, it is our responsibility, as the worldwide leader in ophthalmic optics, to contribute actively to investigating myopia’s causes and ways to fight this disorder, together with leading scientists”.

Essilor has been cooperating with the Wenzhou Medical University for more than 10 years on numerous research projects. In the recent years, Essilor International has also been co-operating with several famous Chinese universities and Eye Hospitals for research projects, such as myopia control or new lens material and coating technology, for instance through the Joint Research Center created with the Shanghai University (SEJRDC).

The Group is also involved in the “REAP-Rural Education Action Project” study launched in May 2012, with the Stanford University, to study the link between visual correction and school success in China.

Two billion myopic people in 2020

With one fourth of the worldwide population being myopic today, compared to 15% in 1950, myopia is a concerning phenomenon, especially in Asia. According to estimates, more than 2bn people will be touched by myopia in 2020. Today in China, up to 80% of young people aged 16 to 18 living in urban areas are myopic. In Taiwan and Japan, it has become the second cause of blindness. Though environmental factors are known to play a crucial role in myopia development, studies have demonstrated that it was possible to slow the progression of myopia in young people with dedicated eyewear.

Promising innovations

Essilor’s R&D teams have been investigating the phenomenon of myopia for years and have developed innovative solutions to slow down myopia’s progression in young people. Essilor has even developed a dedicated range of lenses, which make near-vision accommodation easier, and are an effective means of slowing down the progression. Tests on the bifocal Myopilux Max lens have shown that the progression of myopia could be reduced by as much as 62%! These lenses are available in some Asian countries especially affected by myopia, and also in Canada and France.
About Essilor

The world’s leading ophthalmic optics company, Essilor designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of lenses to improve and protect eyesight. Its corporate mission is to enable everyone around the world to access lenses that meet his or her unique vision requirements. To support this mission, the Company allocates more than €150 million to research and innovation every year, in a commitment to continuously bring new, more effective products to market. Essilor’s flagship brands are Varilux®, Crizal®, Definity®, Xperio®, Optifog™ and Foster Grant®. It also develops and markets equipment, instruments and services for eyecare professionals.

Essilor reported consolidated revenue of approximately €5 billion in 2012 and employs around 50,700 people. It operates in some 100 countries with 22 plants, more than 400 prescription laboratories and edging facilities, as well as several research and development centers around the world.

For more information, please visit www.essilor.com.

The Essilor share trades on the NYSE Euronext Paris market and is included in the EuroStoxx 50 and CAC 40 indices. Codes and symbols: ISIN: FR0000121667; Reuters: ESSI.PA; Bloomberg: EI:FP.

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