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The Development of Functional Foods Containing *Cordyceps militaris*

Tae Ho Lee

Strategic Project Team, Research Planning & Management Development, Dong-A ST Co., Ltd; *Email: testtube@donga.co.kr

There is a growing consumer preference for self-medication, which has resulted in the growth of the Korean functional food market to ₩1.5 trillion in 2014. Functional foods that can modulate immune responses and enhance liver health are in the top 2 product-specific health functional food categories. The aim of this project was to develop and commercialize new health functional foods incorporated with *Cordyceps militaris*. *Cordyceps* genus includes about 400 species, many of which have been used as traditional medicines for many years in Asian countries. *C. militaris* belongs to the class Ascomycetes and has been used extensively as a crude drug and tonic food in East Asia. Owing to the various physiological activities of its main active constituent, cordycepin, *C. militaris* is currently being used for multiple medicinal purposes. Recently, many studies have tried to elucidate the pharmacological mechanisms underlying the activities of *Cordyceps* spp., which include immune activation, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and antiviral effects. After continuous attempts and research toward industrialization, *C. militaris* cultivated using brown rice was developed into a product by a standardized process and mass-cultivating system. It was successfully introduced into the market and was approved as a functional food ingredient for the first time in Korea. Based on this information, *C. militaris* containing functional food product for strengthening the immune system was released in August 2014 under the brand name “Dongchoong Ilgi.” Dongchoong Ilgi is potentially beneficial for improving immune and liver functions and may enhance both the convenience and effectiveness of health functional foods taken by healthy people and patients with minor illness. In addition, the results of our study may be applicable for the development of health functional foods that could lower the risk of diseases such as the common cold and cancer.