Frederic Kuo – CEO, Fethiann

We seek Western pharmaceutical companies to incorporate our ingredients into combination therapies with Western medicines

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Frederic Kuo, founder and CEO of Fethiann, established the company in 2017 within Taiwan's Hsinchu Science Park. With a PhD background and extensive experience in new drug development, Frederick has positioned Fethiann as Taiwan's sole specialist in natural phytochemical active pharmaceuticals. The company's unique business model integrates Active Phytochemicals Ingredient (API) development, patent licensing, and end-product manufacturing whilst targeting multiple therapeutic indications, including oncology, dermatology, and oral health.

Could you briefly introduce yourself and outline Fethiann’s core focus for our readers?

My name is Frederick, and I am the founder of Fethiann. Our fundamental philosophy centres on natural medicine as humanity’s original healthcare paradigm. For thousands of years, civilisations have relied upon natural medicines – herbs and botanical compounds – to address conditions affecting dental health, cardiovascular function, digestive wellness, and fever management. This historical foundation predates Western pharmaceutical science by millennia.

Our strategic focus integrates natural medicine principles with contemporary Western medical science. We have structured our business across four divisions: pharmaceutical research, medical research, health food development, and medical-grade skincare – the latter emphasising clinical dermatological applications rather than conventional cosmetics.

Our core competency lies in active phytochemical ingredient (API) development represent the critical biochemical compounds essential to new drug development. Pharmaceutical companies and biotechnology firms constitute our primary customer base and partnership network. These organisations focus on new drug design and development, but they require key ingredients to advance their programmes. Fethiann provides these essential API.

In Taiwan, we maintain a unique position as the sole company concentrating exclusively on phytochemical API development. Our customers span new drug development companies, medical universities, contract research organisations, and established pharmaceutical manufacturers. We operate within the pharmaceutical value chain’s midstream segment, supporting both original design manufacturing and original process manufacturing through comprehensive integration capabilities. Our downstream presence extends to end-market products incorporating our patented API.

Our core business centres definitively on API rather than finished products. The API portfolio represents our fundamental commercial foundation and competitive differentiation. For instance, our research and development portfolio encompasses patented API targeting lung cancer inhibition, skincare applications for atopic dermatitis, dry eye syndrome, oral health, lung cancer, dry eye syndrome, inflammation management, gout treatment, and muscle pain relief. We have also developed API addressing metabolic conditions and immune system modulation.

Do you develop these products in-house, or do external drug developers license your patented ingredients?

We develop these API through internal research programmes and establish patent protection. Subsequently, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies license our patented ingredients for specific therapeutic applications – whether oncology, dermatology, or other indications. We advance compounds through preclinical development stages, then out-license these preclinical-stage patents to customers who compensate us through licensing fees and ongoing royalty arrangements.

Could you explain your technology platform and what distinguishes your approach? How do these Taiwanese botanical ingredients function, expressed in accessible terms?

Our technology platform focuses on two indigenous Taiwanese botanical species: Magnolia figo, FMO® and Litsea cubeba, FLC®. The remarkable characteristic of our platform is that these single botanical sources yield active compounds applicable across multiple therapeutic indications.

This multi-indication capability from singular botanical sources represents a fundamental competitive advantage. Conventional new drug development typically follows a one-compound, one-indication paradigm. By contrast, our platform generates revenue across multiple therapeutic areas whilst maintaining end-product manufacturing capabilities and established distribution networks spanning Taiwan and international markets, including pharmacy channels and medical device sectors.

We do not merely provide patents – we deliver comprehensive solutions encompassing patented API and finished products. Our customer base includes pharmacy retail networks across Taipei, Taichung, and southern Taiwan, medical device companies engaged in design and pharmaceutical manufacturing, and various healthcare distribution channels. When customers acquire our API, they receive both the active ingredient and patent licensing rights, constituting our core strategic strength.

When was Fethiann founded, and how has the company evolved since its establishment?

We established Fethiann in 2017, with formal operations commencing in 2018 within Hsinchu Science Park. The year 2017 marked our initial company registration, whilst 2018 represented a pivotal milestone when the Taiwan government and Hsinchu Science Park authorities formally recognised Fethiann as a professional biotechnology enterprise specialising in drug design, API manufacturing, and research and development.

This strategic decision to pursue immediate revenue generation through natural medicine API aligns with contemporary sustainability and ESG principles. Our comprehensive approach extends beyond pharmaceutical applications. We design and manufacture finished products for consumer markets, and our commitment to environmental sustainability manifests through zero-waste production processes. Raw materials not utilised in pharmaceutical production are repurposed for pet food manufacturing, ensuring virtually zero pollution throughout our production cycle. This closed-loop system enables pharmaceutical-grade environmental compliance whilst maximising resource utilisation.

Given the surge in demand for plant-based and natural ingredients, how do you assess the market potential, and what is your strategic vision across such a diverse portfolio?

The global market opportunity is extraordinary. The US pharmaceutical market alone exceeds USD 500 billion annually. Our strategic approach combines our internal research capabilities with strong partnerships – including contract research organisations and pharmaceutical companies – to address these substantial market segments.

Consider specific therapeutic categories: the metabolic health and weight management market represents approximately USD 300 billion globally, spanning the US, European Union, and Asia – particularly Southeast Asian markets including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Taiwan. This market scale reflects widespread lifestyle-related health challenges. In these regions, populations increasingly struggle with overweight and obesity driven by high-calorie diets: fried foods, sugar-laden bubble tea beverages, and similar dietary patterns prevalent throughout Taiwan and neighbouring markets.

The dental and oral health market, specifically periodontitis treatment, represents another massive opportunity. Periodontitis affects populations globally on a moment-by-moment basis, with treatment demand continuous and substantial. This market is immense, fundamentally tied to lifestyle factors and dietary habits.

Non-small cell lung cancer constitutes another critical focus area. The dermatological inflammation market, particularly atopic dermatitis treatment, reaches USD 32 billion globally. This market significance stems from dermatological conditions' profound impact on social interaction and psychological wellbeing. Individuals suffering from acne, inflammatory lesions, or visible skin conditions often experience social anxiety and reduced confidence – our API offer potential solutions for these debilitating conditions.

The dry eye syndrome market will expand dramatically given increasing screen time and environmental factors. The gout treatment market particularly affects younger demographics increasingly. This condition correlates strongly with dietary habits – consumption of high-purine foods including beer, spirits, and seafood. In Taipei, one observes young people frequenting restaurants nightly, consuming high-calorie foods, accompanied by excessive beer consumption. Consequently, hospital emergency departments increasingly treat young patients presenting with acute gout episodes.

Whilst these represent important global market opportunities, our research and development operations remain anchored in Taiwan. We concentrate our technical expertise domestically whilst pursuing international market expansion through strategic partnerships.

You have published scientific research. Could you elaborate on your publications and their findings?

We have published peer-reviewed research in respected scientific journals. Our company serves as first author on multiple publications. One significant paper, published in Molecules journal in 2023, focuses on non-small cell lung cancer applications of magnolol compounds derived from Magnolia figo, FMO®. This publication achieved an impact factor of 4.6, representing substantial scientific recognition.

The research demonstrates that our molecules represent potential new drug candidates for lung cancer treatment. The Molecules journal's acceptance and the strong impact factor validate our scientific approach and therapeutic potential.

We have also published research on dental applications, specifically examining enamel surface recovery and antimicrobial properties through in vitro dual-action natural compound approaches. Periodontitis represents an exceptionally serious public health concern. If patients develop periodontitis, the condition can potentially progress to more severe complications including certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. The World Health Organisation has issued global warnings regarding periodontitis's systemic health implications, underscoring this market's clinical significance.

I have served as first author on these publications, reflecting our direct scientific involvement and expertise development.

Given the scale of global market opportunities, what is your partnership and commercial strategy? What types of partners are you seeking?

Our differentiation lies in our exclusive focus on phytochemical API research and development conducted entirely in-house. We subsequently utilise these API to support new drug development in combination with Western medical science – our customers provide the Western pharmaceutical expertise whilst we supply the novel botanical active ingredients. This represents our core strategic

approach.

We target the USD 500 billion market opportunity across multiple therapeutic indications through strategic partnerships. Our competitive advantage centres on our two proprietary botanical platforms. Customers and potential partners consistently express curiosity: how can single metabolic compounds address multiple therapeutic indications? The answer lies in our proprietary know-how, protected through our patent portfolio. However, our patents do not disclose the complete methodology – our detailed processes remain confidential, documented only in internal protocols never publicly disclosed.

This explains why we face no competitors in Taiwan for Magnolia figo, FMO® or Litsea cubeba, FLC®-derived phytochemical API. To date, no competitor has emerged, and I anticipate this competitive isolation will persist given our protected intellectual property and undisclosed manufacturing expertise.

We seek Western pharmaceutical companies to incorporate our ingredients into combination therapies with Western medicines. Currently, our customer base concentrates in Asia, but we aspire to expand substantially into the US and European Union markets. We welcome partnerships with major Western pharmaceutical companies – even leading technology companies have expressed interest in visiting our facilities to explore potential collaborations.

We require European Union and US customers to achieve our global ambitions. Presently, our potential customer pipeline comprises predominantly Asian companies, but our strategic vision centres on transatlantic expansion. Our API meet global regulatory requirements and quality standards, positioning us for international partnerships.

Beyond API provision and patent licensing, we are developing our own finished products. Our business model evolution encompasses not only business-to-business operations but also business-to-consumer channels. However, our B2C activities primarily support our core B2B partnerships and focus on specific market segments.

For your B2C cosmetics and finished products, are you seeking international distributors beyond Asia?

Our initial finished products target pharmacy channels, small hospitals, and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners – particularly acupuncture specialists who integrate our products into holistic treatment protocols. These products currently distribute in Australia, the US, and Canada,

alongside our domestic Taiwan market.

In Taiwan alone, we currently maintain over 100 business channels. By 2026 or 2027, we project expansion to over 1,000 business channels domestically. Our API and patent licensing strategy prioritises the US and European Union markets given their substantial size and commercial potential.

On a personal level, what motivates you to pursue this work and drive the company forward?

My motivation stems from profound personal experience and professional background. I hold a PhD with extensive experience in new drug development across the biotechnology sector. My personal experiences – which may seem unbelievable to others – have shaped my commitment.

When family members, friends, or relatives receive devastating diagnoses such as lung cancer, and you possess professional expertise in biotechnology and new drug development, you experience profound emotional conflict. You feel simultaneously privileged in your knowledge yet inadequate in your ability to help. When parents or individuals very close to you face these challenges, the emotional weight becomes immense.

However, when you extend this perspective beyond immediate personal relationships to the thousands of patients you will never personally know, you recognise a moral imperative. If your professional expertise can be commercialised and translated into therapeutic solutions – if you can develop products that provide relief to countless patients you will never meet, this constitutes profound motivation.

The opportunity to merge professional capability with humanitarian impact, to potentially alleviate suffering for both known individuals and unknown patients worldwide, represents my fundamental driving force. This convergence of scientific expertise, commercial viability, and compassionate purpose sustains my commitment to Fethiann’s mission.

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