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Bayer launches LifeHub UK focused on AI for drug discovery

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LifeHub UK is the newest member of Bayerâ??s network of LifeHubs designed to plug into the global innovation ecosystems to solve challenges in health and nutrition



Bayer has launched LifeHub UK to accelerate and optimize disease detection and data-driven drug discovery by developing artificial-intelligence-enabled imaging solutions. The new hub is the seventh pillar of Bayer's global network of LifeHubs designed to accelerate the co-exploration and development of pioneering solutions to solve global challenges in health and nutrition.

Kemal Malik, Bayer Board Member for Innovation, said: "We are delighted to launch LifeHub UK. We firmly believe that artificial intelligence has transformative potential for healthcare which can lead to enhancements in prediction, prevention and personalized treatments."

Monika Lessl, Head of Corporate Innovation, R&D and Societal Engagement at Bayer, added: "Today's global challenges in health and nutrition are too large for one single company to tackle alone. This is why our Open Innovation strategy is rooted in a newly-designed global network of LifeHubs which boast offerings from partnering and incubation programs to world-class venturing activities."

AI-enabled imaging solutions in focus at LifeHub UK

As a first step, Bayer's LifeHub UK will focus on the development of AI-enabled radiology solutions by building on its longstanding knowledge and expertise in the medical imaging field. Clinical AI company Sensyne Health – after sealing a collaboration agreement with Bayer earlier this year – is one of the first companies to move into LifeHub UK. In addition to the already-established collaboration, both parties intend to conduct joint R&D activities for the development of AI-enabled imaging solutions.

Olaf Weber, Head of Radiology R&D at Bayer, today welcomed the opportunities that LifeHub UK will open up, saying: "Bayer is looking forward to bringing its knowledge and expertise in medical imaging within radiology into joint development activities with our partners at LifeHub UK." He added that main intention was to develop digital solutions that deliver patient benefits through improved diagnoses that in turn can enable earlier disease management and interventions.

The new LifeHub is based in Reading's Green Park – at the heart of the Thames Valley – which boasts more than 45,000 tech-related jobs and contributes around 12 billion pound to UK annual digital technology revenues. According to "Tech Nation 2019" the UK is today the world's third biggest market for AI investment – following the US and China – with funding rising six-fold since 2014.

LifeHubs offer touch points for innovators from all over the world as cornerstone of Open Innovation strategy

Bayer's network of LifeHubs strives to springboard solutions at the intersection of health and nutrition by exploring promising leads through collaboration with customers and entrepreneurs. As such, the brightest minds within and beyond Bayer are invited to incubate solutions, technologies and pilot new business models through alliances that explore cutting-edge technologies.

The six other LifeHubs are located at the global innovation hotspots of Berlin, Boston, California, Lyon, Singapore and Tokyo/Osaka. Each site boasts an individual focus field, leveraging the strength of its location: Boston, for example, focuses on close collaboration with entrepreneurs and students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University environment. Another important focus of Bayer's Boston-related activities lies on pharma science partnerships with the Broad Institute. LifeHubs Berlin and California meanwhile combine a so-called "CoLaborator" lab space with various R&D and digital health opportunities that tap into the cities' startup environment. LifeHubs Japan and Singapore focus on Pharma research collaborations while Lyon offers CropScience partnerships. Bayer's Open Innovation opportunities also include G4A (formerly entitled Grants4Apps) program, which provide start-ups with holistic offerings including incubation space, funding and mentoring.

Bayer's collaborative innovation ecosystem is completed by highly-ambitious venture activities. This is leveraged through the initiative "Leaps by Bayer" which co-founds new biotech start-up companies that work on groundbreaking innovations using cutting-edge technologies like genome editing and stem cell therapy. Since 2015, Leaps by Bayer has invested almost USD 1 bn (incl. committed funds) into six Leaps joint ventures – including Casebia, BlueRock Therapeutics and JoynBio – as well as a few smaller collaborations.