

Astrazeneca to close R&D site in Bangalore

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Consequently, the company will no longer carry out early stage research in neglected tropical diseases like TB and malaria.

The closure of this site will impact AstraZeneca's 168 full-time employees, who work on pharmaceutical development and drug discovery research into the neglected tropical disease.

Mr Sudhir Nambiar, site head and vice president, pharmaceutical development, R&D, AstraZeneca, Bangalore, said, "We realize this is a difficult news for our research colleagues in Bangalore and our priority is to support them over the coming months. We have not taken this decision lightly. We acknowledge the excellent work carried out by our people in Bangalore. These changes reflect the company's strategic focus on investing in our core therapy areas and simplifying our R&D footprint."

Pharmaceutical development projects currently carried out at the site will either transfer to its Macclesfield site in the UK, or be carried out by external providers said the company's press release.

However, AstraZeneca will continue to provide expertise to help advance existing third-party neglected tropical diseases programmes for the benefit of patients.

Employees affected by the changes will start leaving the company at the end of April this year.

AstraZeneca's India commercial organization and clinical operations, which is also based at the Avishkar site, will move to a new location in Bangalore this year.

Excerpts from an exclusive interview with AstraZeneca's senior management to *BioSpectrum*:

What kind of impact will this decision have on AstraZeneca's business strategy?

This decision is part of AstraZeneca's broader global business strategy to simplify its research and development footprint, and focus resources on three core therapy areas namely: oncology; cardiovascular, metabolic & respiratory diseases; inflammation and autoimmunity.

Within that context, we have decided to consolidate the pharmaceutical development work in Macclesfield.

AstraZeneca will no longer engage in early-stage research activities in neglected tropical diseases including tuberculosis and malaria; however we will continue to make our compound library available through open innovation partnerships and provide expertise that can help advance research programmes.

We will continue to advance our promising early and late stage pipeline of anti-infective compounds, including our AZD5847 project, which is in Phase II development for the treatment of TB, currently led from our Boston R&D site.

Why will the company ignore research in tropical diseases?

AstraZeneca and the pharmaceutical industry are facing some difficult challenges and as a result we have had to make some very tough choices.

How is this going to affect the employees in the company? And what are the compensation the employees are entitled to?

All employees will be treated fairly and with respect, and will be provided support through this transition, in line with employees impacted at AstraZeneca's R&D sites that have closed elsewhere in the world.

Can you give us more information on moving of clinical operations to Bangalore?

AstraZeneca's India commercial organization and the clinical operations based at the Avishkar site will move to a new location in Bangalore later this year.

Our sales and marketing group and clinical operations employees will not be impacted by this decision.