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Johnson and Johnson launch a 'Neuroscience Catalyst'

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Janssen and J&J Innovation have launched a new project called the 'Neuroscience Catalyst' to drive innovation in neurological research.

They plan to set up ten research projects that examine mood disorders, Alzheimer's disease and other such neurological conditions. The idea is to help seed ideas and ultimately spin out startups from academia.

"We are particularly excited by this - helping academic entrepreneurs take their ideas to the next level," said Mr Guy Seabrook, vice president of Neuroscience Scientific Innovation at J&J Innovation in a statement. He added, "In the last decade, a lot of big pharma have exited the field of psychiatric disorders, particularly mood disorders. We see that as a big opportunity-finding compounds that work in a matter of days instead of months."

Janssen is helping operationalize the academic spinouts, as well as raise downstream venture financing, and design a clear exit strategy. Much like many of these pharma-academia partnerships, J&J will also provide in-kind support, allowing access to its state of the art resources and conducting functions like compound and lab screening.

The University of Toronto is co-funding this project, and creating a structure to evaluate research proposals from academic hospitals and research institutions throughout Canada.

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"Conditions such as dementia and depression affect hundreds of millions worldwide, and that number is rising. By working together in an open innovation partnership, we can conduct the basic research needed to identify new therapeutic options for patients," said Mr Ruth Ross, director of the Center for Collaborative Drug Research, Toronto, in a statement.

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