

AstraZeneca gifts its Quebec & UK centers

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With some deft manoeuvres, the facility was salvaged and entrusted to NeoMed Institute, set up specially to run the research center. NeoMed is a public-private partnership venture.

AstraZeneca contributed a bulk of the \$100 million investment in the center by providing the lab facility as it is and further sanctioning \$3 million. Pfizer which has a research center nearby was also "persuaded" by the Quebec government to contribute more than \$2 million to the cause. NeoMed is now a thriving bioincubator and has hired back more than 50 of the retrenched scientists in the last two years.

"I do hope AstraZeneca can emulate their generosity shown to the government of Quebec in Montreal, Canada, where it donated the Neuroscience Research Centre and IP to create the NEOMED Institute for Neuroscience. A similar gesture in Bangalore can help to create the Brain Research Institute with Indian Institute of Science, or even create a biopharma incubator with the available infrastructure.

It will also create a goodwill by dispelling the impression that MNCs are not committed to India. It will be a shame to destroy such valuable research infrastructure and sell it to real estate developers," elucidated Dr Mazumdar-Shaw, Biocon's chief and chair of Karnataka government's Vision Group on Biotechnology.

In another recently related development, AstraZeneca on March 11, 2014 announced the sale of its Alderley Park site in Cheshire, UK, to Manchester Science Parks (MSP), a Greater Manchester based public-private partnership and science park operator. This move, according to the company, is an endeavor to establish a new global R&D center and corporate headquarters in Cambridge, UK, by 2016.

There are many more such examples of Big Pharma companies helping the local research communities even after their exits in other parts of the world.

Considering the invaluable contribution of an advanced research center like Avishkar in nurturing young companies and budding scientists, in the back drop of declining quality of research in India, the government of Karnataka should probably take advantage of this opportunity to prevail upon AstraZeneca in order to salvage its R&D center and use it to strengthen research at all possible capacities.