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India's home away from home

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India's home away from home



At present, more than 30 of the world's leading biomedical sciences companies such as Pfizer, Merck Sharpe & Dohme, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, and Takeda maintain a significant presence in Singapore helping to expand biopharmaceutical industry by more than 22 percent over just five years, during 2007-2012. Singapore's efficient and businessfriendly policies, trusted reputation, and its attractive global talent have played a vital role in luring Indian companies to move to and achieve their global ambitions.

Over 5,000 Indian enterprises have set up base in Singapore, with many leading Indian companies such as Tata Consultancy Services, Fortis Healthcare, Tech Mahindra, and Punj Lloyd setting up their regional or international headquarters in Singapore. This makes the Indian business community the largest foreign business community in Singapore and one of the top locations for India's outbound investments. Singapore has clearly established itself as the home away from home for Indian companies' international business growth.

In the years ahead, as Singapore strengthens its translational and clinical research capabilities, it is well positioned to support biopharmaceutical companies in their efforts to accelerate the drug discovery process with next-generation technologies. With strong governance, the supporting business infrastructure to support Indian companies' international growth, and a thriving global R&D environment, Singapore continues to be an attractive destination for internationalizing Indian companies to access, expand, develop and manage global markets.

Along with being a trusted business hub for global companies, Singapore has built up a strong innovation infrastructure to support the growth of knowledge-intensive industries of which the pharmaceutical and healthcare sector is one. Today, more than 7,100 researchers carry out biomedical sciences R&D-across drug discovery, translational and clinical research in more than 50 companies, universities, and 30 public sector institutes under the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Nearly 50 companies are carrying out biomedical sciences R&D in collaboration with these research institutes in areas such as drug discovery, translational, and clinical research. Many Indian pharmaceutical and healthcare companies are increasingly looking at Singapore for innovative development of new medicines, formulation capabilities, and drug delivery mechanisms.

Singapore's company-friendly research ecosystem helps to improve R&D decision-making and accelerates drug discovery and development. For instance, Singapore's large investment into clinical research in gastric cancer (oncology), eye diseases, schizophrenia (neuroscience), dengue (infectious diseases) and metabolic diseases can also generate outcomes for Indian populations as the incidence of certain diseases such as heart disease and diabetes are common among both nations.

In Singapore, Indian companies can access unique patient pools from all major Asian genotypes (Chinese, Malay, and Indian) and forge collaborations with the Singapore-based research community. One example would be A*STAR's MoU with India's Department of Science and Technology, signed in August 2012, to drive joint workshops and grant calls between the two countries. Singapore invites global companies to come over and work in collaboration with these research institutes to create solutions, discover and invent new drugs to treat these diseases.

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New therapies are continuously being discovered through scientific research fostered by A*STAR, its biomedical research institutes, and Singapore's clinical research teams. For example: Partnering with A*STAR, research institutes, and hospitals, Novartis, which houses more than 100 researchers from 18 different nationalities at the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases, teamed up with Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, and the Scripps Research Institute to develop a breakthrough drug against malaria. This breakthrough comes at a time when drug-resistant strains are becoming an increasing threat in the region due to irrational drug use and poor-quality or counterfeit medicine. Singapore is also reputed for its clinical research and clinical trials management.

The government has provided leading infrastructure to facilitate translational and clinical research. Investigational Medicine Units (IMU) are dedicated for early-phase trials in public hospitals, while the Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI) focuses on supporting later stage trials. Looking ahead, Singapore has committed S$16.1 billion in continued support of research, innovation, and enterprise activities during 2011-2015. Out of the S$16.1 billion, $3.7 billion (23 percent) is allotted to enhancing the existing biomedical R&D infrastructure, and integrating multidisciplinary research.