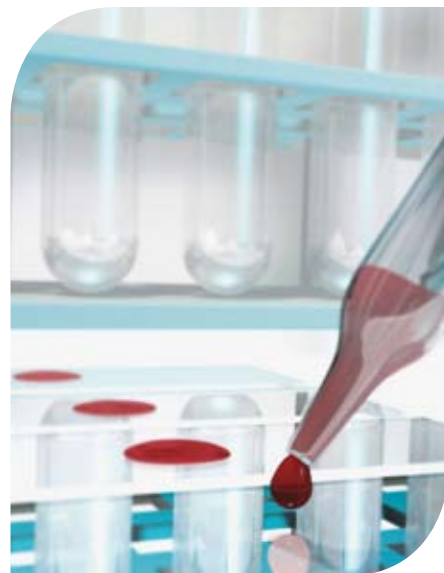


Special Feature Section

Introduction



The looming patent cliff has prompted many pharma companies to proactively implement strategies to enhance their pipeline and increase productivity. This impending crisis is also pushing many companies to adopt more innovative business models to better compete in the new global marketplace. One new strategy is to quicken the pace of moving promising molecules through globalised clinical trials in countries with differing regulatory requirements. Many view this as a way to improve revenue by gaining faster access to the worldwide market. Recognising Asia as an important emerging market, pharma companies have also begun to shift more clinical trial activities to this region. Furthermore, Asia offers many competitive advantages such as significantly lower clinical development costs and a ready pool of treatment naïve patients.

Conveniently located at the heart of Asia, Singapore is gaining importance as a strategic hub for companies conducting clinical trials. Despite being a small island state with a population of only 4.9 million, Singapore has much to offer as a clinical trial “control tower”. Its distinctive population mix – 75% Chinese, 14% Malays, 9% Indians and 2% others, provides a unique opportunity for companies to conduct clinical studies on a well phenotyped patient pool with heterogeneous genetic makeup and varying dietary preference and lifestyle all at a single site.

Furthermore, pharma companies are increasingly seeing the value of exploratory first-in-human clinical studies as a way to assess molecules using human data before selecting them for full blown clinical trials. Many have since found that such an approach, when coupled

with pharmacogenomics, toxicogenomics and bioimaging biomarker studies, resulted in better molecule selection than those based solely on animal and in vitro data. In this regard, Singapore's investments over the last 9 years to build up both basic and translational research capabilities have led to the establishment of many such enabling platforms that companies are now finding useful for their bench to bedside translational studies and Proof-of-Concept trials. These capabilities, coupled with a growing pool of talented clinician-scientists, an efficient and open-minded regulatory authority (Health Sciences Authority), general respect for intellectual property and highly-organised academic medical centers that plugged into the clinical research networks, are turning Singapore into a location of choice for translational research and the implementation of innovative exploratory trials.

Recognising Singapore's potential, several pharma companies have chosen to set up their early phase clinical development units here. In addition, many clinical research organisations (CROs) have also elected to establish their regional headquarters in Singapore and use the local office to organise and coordinate their trial activities for the region. Several organisations have also opted to place their central laboratories here. These international CROs offer a wide range of services, ranging from Phase I to pharmacovigilance studies. Some are also setting up innovative biomarker discovery



and validation services to support their clients. A number of the more prominent organisations are featured in the following section. Singapore is poised to ride on this growth of clinical trial activities in the region and is well positioned to offer innovative supporting tools and capabilities that few in the region are able to match.

The Editors