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Singapore's Tessa Therapeutics appoints ex-Takeda VP as CEO

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Seasoned pharmaceutical industry executive, Thomas Willemsen to lead Tessa's corporate and development strategy built around its proprietary autologous and allogeneic CAR-T platforms



Singapore's Tessa Therapeutics, a clinical-stage cell therapy company developing next-generation cancer treatments for hematological malignancies and solid tumors, has announced the appointment of Thomas Willemsen as its President and Chief Executive Officer effective October 1, 2022. Mr. Willemsen has also been named as a member of Tessa's Board of Directors.

Willemsen brings more than 25 years of experience to Tessa with extensive international management and leadership experience in the pharmaceutical industry. He joins Tessa from Takeda Pharmaceuticals, where he served as Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific, leading the transformation of Takeda across 10 markets and enhancing its focus on rare and genetic diseases, oncology, and vaccines.

As President and CEO, Willemsen will lead Tessa's corporate, business and development strategy focused on maximizing the value potential of the company's proprietary autologous and allogeneic CAR-T platforms, including ongoing clinical programs involving its autologous CD30-CAR-T therapy (TT11) and allogeneic CD30.CAR EBVST therapy (TT11X). Willemsen will lead Tessa from its global headquarters in Singapore. John Ng, who had served as Tessa's acting CEO since November 2021, will continue as the company's Chief Technical Officer.

Prior to Takeda, Willemsen held the position of Vice President, Oncology, at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) for its Intercontinental & Emerging Markets business, where he was assigned to develop the business' strategy for Asia & Emerging Markets, including Access Strategy and Commercial Structure design. Prior to that, Willemsen served as Chairman and General Manager for GSK in China, and as General Manager of GSK Taiwan. He also spent 12 years with Merck KGaA in various commercial and regional roles in the Asia Pacific region, and as the Head of its German Oncology business unit.