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ASIA EDITION

US-based startup Cullgen inks billion-dollar deal with Japanese pharma firm Astellas

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Strategic collaboration and option agreement to advance innovative targeted protein degraders

Japan-headquartered Astellas Pharma and US-based startup Cullgen have entered into a research collaboration and exclusive option agreement to discover multiple innovative protein degraders.

This partnership aims to develop targeted protein degraders by combining Cullgen's uSMITE targeted protein degradation platform with Astellas' drug discovery capabilities. Cullgen's uSMITE platform is based on novel E3 ligands, which play a crucial role in protein degradation. By leveraging this platform along with Astellas' expertise, the two companies aim to identify clinical development candidates for protein degraders.

Astellas will provide Cullgen an upfront payment of $35 million. Cullgen is also entitled to receive an additional $85 million upon Astellas' exercise of the license option with respect to the lead programme.

Total compensation to Cullgen could exceed $1.9 billion if Astellas exercises all of its license options and all milestones for all programs are achieved. Cullgen is also eligible to receive royalty payments from Astellas on any potential commercial sales.

Under the terms of the agreement, Cullgen and Astellas will conduct joint research activities to identify potential compounds for clinical development. Following this research phase, Astellas will have the exclusive option to licence the rights for clinical development and commercialisation of the protein degrader compounds that are discovered during the collaboration.