

BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024 convenes International experts in Taipei to explore Biotech Trends and Opportunities

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In the face of stormy weather, the forum unraveled various facets of Biotech industry including cell and gene therapy, precision medicine, digital healthcare, venture capital and investment and more



BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024 commenced on 24 July at the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center (TaiNEX 2), undeterred by the approaching typhoon. This year's conference theme was 'Global View, Asian Touch', reflecting Taiwan's commitment to expanding the regional biotech industry at global levels.

The morning Plenary Session entitled Global Biotech Development kicked off with opening remarks by Johnsee Lee, Chairman of BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024; Chung-Hsiun Wu, Chairman of the Taiwan Bio Industry Organization (Taiwan BIO); and Hilary Stiss, Director of International Affairs at the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO), and Executive Director of the International Council of Biotechnology Associations (ICBA). Taiwan BIO was founded 35 years ago and has 150 organizational members.

Taiwan BIO Secretary-General **Wallace Lin** was elected Vice Chairman of the International Council of Biotechnology Associations (ICBA), marking the first time a Taiwanese or even any Asian has held this position. With Taiwan's significant and growing role in the global biomedical supply chains, Wu pledged that the association will continue to promote the development of Taiwan's biotech industry to ensure its sustainable growth.

Notable speakers in this session included André Andonian, Chair of Asia Pacific and Strategic Advisor of Flagship Pioneering; Sabrina Yang, Principal at Flagship Pioneering and Co-Founder of Empress Tx; and Feng Zhang, Tang Prize Laureate and MIT professor. Together this esteemed group shared insights on the latest global biotechnology advancements, emerging industry trends and future opportunities.

Johnsee Lee, in opening the occasion, noted that despite breakthroughs in many emerging technologies, the last 12 months had been turbulent—particularly financial markets—but that at this year's gathering many activities had been planned to find ways to overcome such obstacles.

BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024 conference expanded into three parallel tracks;

- Innovation Forum
- Investment Summit

- Regional Cooperation Forums
- international exhibition
- one-on-one business matchmaking,
- company presentations and satellite forums

Chung-Hsiun Wu, Chairman of Taiwan BIO, said that Taiwan BIO with its primary goals being to expand global cooperation, serve as a bridge between industry, government, and academia.

Hilary Stiss who represents the International Council of Biotechnology Associations (ICBA), the world's most important biotech association organization, highlighted the immense potential in Taiwan's capabilities and in partnerships.

A spectacular Showcase of Delegates Presentations and Conference Sessions:

BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024, introduced a new format of three parallel forum tracks to assist Taiwan's biotech community address the challenges and complexity of the industry.

The first day's program explores a session entitled *'Through International Alignment for a Healthier Taiwan'*, featuring a number of notable speakers, including Johnsee Lee, Chairman of BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024; Hidehito Katsuma, Chairman of the Industrial Research Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (IRPMA) and General Manager of Eli Lilly Taiwan; Lily Wong, Partner, PwC Taiwan; Eric Y. Chuang, Vice President and General Director, Biomedical Technology and Device Research Laboratories at the Institute at the Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI); Toshihiko Takeda, Senior Advisor, Boston Consulting Group; and Frances Milnes, President of Novartis Taiwan.

Another session focused on the current hot topic of “antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs)” and featured presentations from Liu Li-Cheng, Chairman of EirGenix; Heidi Wang, CEO of OBI Pharma; Gur Roshwalb, Partner at aMoon, Israel's largest pharmaceutical venture capital fund; Zhu Gui-Dong, CEO of SparX Biopharmaceuticals; and Edward Hsieh, Vice President of R&D, Formosa Laboratories.

Furthermore, the additional sessions explored the latest applications and future developments in the field of “cell and gene therapy”, where an esteemed panel of experts discussed the current challenges in cell and gene therapy from multiple perspectives including funding, regulation, manufacturing, and ethics. The session featured Chien-Tsun Kuan, CEO of ARCE Therapeutics; John Tsai, Managing Partner at Syncona; Alex Shih-Min Huang, Vice President at BeiGene; Chia-Hua Maggie Ho, COO of Amerex; David Chang, CEO of the newly-formed Taiwan Bio-Manufacturing Corporation (TBMC); and Gur Roshwalb, Partner at aMoon.

Exploring opportunities in the Asia-Pacific through enthralling Sessions:

André Andonian of Flagship Pioneering said that Asia had become a crucial hub for global innovations, with approximately 60 percent of GDP coming from manufacturing and around 60 percent of global patents originating from Asia. Thus, Flagship Pioneering began expanding into the Asia-Pacific market starting 2023, establishing offices in Singapore, Japan, and South Korea, with plans to extend to other countries. In addition to investing independently, Flagship aims to establish additional partnerships to accelerate the development of biotechnology, bioengineering, and medicine. Sabrina Yang, Principal at Flagship Pioneering and Co-Founder of Empress Tx, shared insights on how Flagship Pioneering creates growth-oriented companies through its unique ‘What if’ process exploring innovative technologies.

Feng Zhang, recipient of the Tang Prize in Biopharmaceutical Science and professor at MIT, shared two studies by his team on viral vector delivery systems which hold promise for further development into innovative therapies.

Anis Uzzaman, Founder and CEO of Pegasus Tech Ventures, shared investment trends from Silicon Valley and his perspective as a Silicon Valley investor on biotechnology and medical care. He said that he was particularly optimistic about the future development of data science integrated with AI, gene editing, bio-printing combined with tissue engineering, stem cells, and brain-machine interfaces. Pegasus has invested in over 260 startups, with 29 of these companies achieving unicorn status.

Paru Deshpande, Vice President of R&D, Health Technologies Division, IMEC, discussed how the interaction between biology and technology was driving the future of healthcare. He also showcased various digital health solutions developed by IMEC using wafer technology.

Zubin J. Daruwalla, Health Industries Leader at PwC Singapore and Asia-Pacific, discussed emerging trends in the global health industry, emphasizing that 'healthcare' as a concept will shift towards 'health', as innovative technologies can now address medical issues before they arise. He elaborated on the vitality of embracing technology to advance innovation.

Brian Mi, President, Asia-Pacific, IQVIA, highlighted overall trends and opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry. He noted that post-COVID-19, large pharmaceutical companies had shifted their funding towards research and development and are currently focusing on non-communicable diseases. Regulatory agencies, due to increased flexibility, have also better facilitated drug market entry. He also said that artificial intelligence (AI) had brought transformative changes to drug development.

Miguel Forte, President of the International Society for Cell and Gene Therapy (ISCT), and CEO and co-founder at Kiji Therapeutics, in his presentation explained that cell and gene therapy products had seen exponential growth over the past 15 years, but despite such opportunities there are various challenges that remained in implementing these therapies.

Overall, BIO Asia–Taiwan 2024 promises to be an exciting and influential event!

The next edition, **BIO Asia–Taiwan 2025 is scheduled for July 23 to 27**