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ASIA EDITION

Puerto Rico Is Reclaiming Its Place as a Global Biopharma Innovation and Manufacturing Hub

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At BIO International Convention 2026, Lan Nguyen, Chief Business and Strategy Officer at OcyonBio, discusses why Puerto Rico is emerging as a full-spectrum life sciences hub, bridging clinical-stage biotechnology with commercial-scale biomanufacturing through flexible manufacturing models and a rapidly expanding innovation ecosystem.

During the **BIO International Convention 2026** (June 22–25) in San Diego, **BioSpectrum Asia** spoke with **Lan Nguyen, Chief Business and Strategy Officer at OcyonBio**, about Puerto Rico's transformation from a pharmaceutical manufacturing powerhouse into a next-generation biotechnology and advanced therapeutics hub. Nguyen explains how the island's U.S. regulatory framework, expanding biologics infrastructure, growing investment momentum, and innovative Partnership Development and Manufacturing Organisation (PDMO) model are creating new opportunities for emerging biotechs while strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of global biopharmaceutical supply chains.

What differentiates Puerto Rico's life sciences ecosystem from other emerging biopharma destinations?

Puerto Rico is not an emerging destination — it is a re-emerging powerhouse. The island exports more than $53 billion in bioscience products annually and manufactures 8 of the world's top 15 selling pharmaceuticals — a track record no emerging market can claim.

Four structural advantages set Puerto Rico apart:

- **U.S. regulatory jurisdiction:** FDA oversight and U.S. cGMP standards — manufacturing here is functionally equivalent to the mainland, without the cost premium.
- **Supply chain depth:** Decades of large-scale pharma manufacturing have built a dense ecosystem of qualified suppliers, logistics providers, and specialized talent that takes generations to replicate.
- **Competitive incentives:** Act 60 and related frameworks make Puerto Rico financially competitive with Ireland and Singapore on total cost.

- **Geopolitical security:** A domestic U.S. manufacturing address that is also cost-competitive — a combination no other jurisdiction offers.

The market is validating this: over $2.2 billion committed by 22+ companies between 2025 and mid-2026, including Eli Lilly's $1.2 billion expansion, Amgen's nearly $1 billion commitment, and new international entrants like PharmaEssentia from Taiwan.

Where are you seeing the strongest opportunities for innovation and industry collaboration?

The strongest opportunity is at the intersection of biologics, advanced modalities, and accessible manufacturing infrastructure — a gap that is only now being meaningfully addressed.

New entrants are signaling the direction: PharmaEssentia has committed $46 million to establish its first U.S. biologics facility here, and Ceria Therapeutics is building a GMP hub for next-generation medicines at the Molecular Sciences Research Center in San Juan. These are not incremental moves — they reflect genuine confidence in Puerto Rico's next manufacturing era.

The collaboration opportunity I find most compelling is the early-stage and clinical-stage segment. Large captive facilities — Amgen Juncos, AbbVie Barceloneta — are not accessible to third parties. Large CDMOs, in the US and overseas, deprioritize small programs. This leaves emerging biotechs with limited options and long wait times. Closing that gap through dedicated, flexible, small-batch cGMP Drug Product capacity is where OcyonBio operates, and where the demand signal is growing strongest. Not only can OcyonBio support these biotechs during clinical phase, our DP capacity can scale with them through commercial stages.

How is OcyonBio contributing to the next phase of life sciences growth in Puerto Rico?

OcyonBio fills a structural gap that is essential to the long-term sustainability of Puerto Rico's life sciences ecosystem.

We operate under two complementary models. As a PDMO — Partnership Development and Manufacturing Organization — we function as a cGMP incubator: clients may commission dedicated, autonomous R&D or manufacturing suites with their own equipment, processes, and regulatory identity within our facility, serving programs from early development through commercial stage. As a CDMO – Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization, we provide open-access sterile fill-finish Drug Product services at 60 million units of annual capacity — and critically, with the ability to support small batch sizes to large commercial batch sizes.

That last point matters more than it may seem. Emerging biotechs running Phase 1 or Phase 2 clinical trials routinely face 12–18 month wait times at large CDMOs, where small programs are consistently deprioritized. At OcyonBio, those same companies can access dedicated cGMP Drug Product capacity quickly, at the batch sizes they actually need, and establish their manufacturing and regulatory history in Puerto Rico from day one.

The large commercial facilities — Amgen, AbbVie, Lilly — are the anchor tenants of Puerto Rico's life sciences economy. The next generation of anchor tenants is being built today in clinical-stage programs. OcyonBio is the bridge that keeps that pipeline on the island.

What challenges must be addressed to accelerate innovation and commercialization?

Three challenges stand out:

- **Global awareness among emerging biotechs.** Puerto Rico is well known to large pharma. It is far less known as a viable manufacturing home for a Series B biotech in clinical trials. Closing that awareness gap — through platforms like **BioSpectrum Asia** and InvestPR's international outreach, which brought its **largest-ever delegation of 50+ representatives to BIO International 2025** — is critical to sustaining momentum.
- **Specialized workforce depth.** Puerto Rico has a strong general life sciences workforce, but demand for specialized biologics and advanced modality manufacturing talent is outpacing supply. Targeted training pipelines in partnership with the University of Puerto Rico system are needed now.
- **Infrastructure resilience.** The memory of Hurricane Maria remains present in the risk calculus of global site selectors. Progress is real — AstraZeneca's iPR Pharmaceuticals facility in Canóvanas achieved a **60% carbon footprint reduction** through on-site renewable energy investment — but energy independence must become the island-wide standard, not the exception.

What trends do you expect will define Puerto Rico's life sciences landscape over the next five years?

- **Reshoring as a structural shift.** U.S. policy incentives, tariff dynamics, and supply chain security considerations have created a durable tailwind for domestic manufacturing. Puerto Rico — as the most cost-competitive domestic U.S. option — is a primary beneficiary. The $2.2 billion+ in investment committed since 2025 is evidence of this structural shift.
- **Biologics and advanced modalities defining the next manufacturing wave.** The infrastructure being built today — by PharmaEssentia, Ceria Therapeutics, and OcyonBio — moves Puerto Rico well beyond its traditional small molecule base into the next era of biomanufacturing.
- **Emerging biotechs becoming a meaningful part of the ecosystem.** The next chapter of Puerto Rico's life sciences story will increasingly feature small and mid-size biotechs — companies that choose the island because they can access flexible, dedicated, cGMP-compliant Drug Product capacity at the right batch size, quickly, and grow their manufacturing footprint here from clinical through commercial scale. InvestPR has named biosciences its #1 priority sector for FY2026, and the pipeline of companies being recruited to the island reflects that mandate.
- **The PDMO model gaining recognition as a distinct infrastructure category.** As the clinical-stage pipeline in Puerto Rico grows, the Partnership Development and Manufacturing Organization model — a true cGMP incubator offering dedicated capacity and regulatory standing from day one — will become a recognized and sought-after capability, complementing the large-scale commercial facilities that have historically defined the island's manufacturing identity.
- **Puerto Rico reclaiming its identity as a full-spectrum life sciences hub.** With committed investment exceeding $2.2 billion, InvestPR's biosciences-first mandate, and a growing roster of international companies choosing the island, Puerto Rico is not recovering — it is leading. Over the next five years, I expect the island to be recognized globally as a complete life sciences ecosystem: from early clinical development and small-batch cGMP manufacturing through large-scale commercial production and global distribution.